

**Domestic Relations: A Visual Critique of Ornamental  
Restraint and Difference.**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This investigation visually explores the decline of ornamentation in the decoration of domestic space, with subsequent loss of personal identity associated with this phenomenon.

The home is potentially a statement of our individuality and the way we decorate it, as in the way we dress, suggests our distinctiveness to the outside world. I have formed an opinion as a result of this research, that as individuals in a mass-consumer society, there has been a subtle undermining of this uniqueness. The appeal of mass-produced, 'modernist-style' goods for the home, vigorously promoted and readily available, has relieved the home decorator of much of the decision-making. I believe this has resulted in a 'look' that is neutral and lacks the rich variation of personal history and identity that prevails in more ornamented interiors.

This project aims to make the viewer aware of this shift and find ways of engaging more actively and creatively with domestic environments. Drawing on imagery and materials associated with domestic and consumer culture, the project attempts to expand on aspects of Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of *relational aesthetics* and *postproduction*, involving the consideration of ideas such as the beholder's ethic, interaction and the reuse of culturally laden materials in order to broaden these theories.

Relying on the viewer's presence within the work, this project delivers an *experience* as the end product rather than a purely aesthetic encounter. This experience of process is situated in the context of the work of a range of artists such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Michael Lin, Yayoi Kasama and Daniel Buren, who have likewise sought to produce works which involve the active participation of the viewer.

My contribution to the field aims to find new ways to provoke active engagement and stimulate members of my audience to be more conscious about the decoration of their own domestic interiors.



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## INTRODUCTION

This investigation seeks to negotiate and to reflect on the consequences of a lack of ornamentation in many modern interiors, with some focus on the implications that this has for our sense of identity and the impact it has on our feeling for the spaces we occupy. Drawing on imagery and materials associated with domestic and consumer culture, the project makes use of aspects of Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of *relational aesthetics* and *postproduction*, including consideration of the beholder's ethic, interaction, and the reuse of culturally laden materials to visually explore the phenomenon of a diminishing decorative aesthetic within contemporary middle-class dwelling spaces.

Each of the works in this submission is a reflection of the different stages of the exploration into the causes and effects brought on by a loss of individual creativity and distancing from a fundamental area of our lives - the home.

One of the characteristics that distinguish us from one another is creative difference sustained by individual choice. The home is potentially a statement of individuality and the way we decorate it, as in the way we dress, proves our distinctiveness to an outside world. It is in my view that this distinctiveness is being eroded as the desire for mass-produced, 'modernist-styled' goods and easy decorating options that take away the creative input of the home decorator. I believe that the result of this is a 'look' that is universal and which lacks the complexities of a more ornamented interior.

Formerly, having studied architecture with a special interest in the phenomenology of architecture, and worked as an interior designer in the late '80s and early '90s when floral, feminine interiors had reached a crescendo, I watched as this move toward a more 'modernist style' began to unfold. Institutionally trained professional architects and designers of domestic consumer goods and interiors refined this style, which was initially marketed toward the elite. It indicated a desire for a systematized, ordered lifestyle and provided a soothing haven after the relentless visual overstimulation of daily life. But in many cases this design style imparted a symbolic language for the middle-class masses to emulate; it was simple in concept, required little creative input, was economical to produce, and thus became a desirable, marketable style, available for a fraction of the cost of previous styles.

This project has employed an informal mode of social research based on interviews with personnel and customers in local furniture and home decorator stores. While it also acknowledges a broader community interest in decoration and ornamentation in the home, as demonstrated in the various television shows and aspirational magazines for example, this investigation remains limited to a local middle class demographic where it has found a move towards ornamentation was not a dominant trend. This research has provided material to develop concepts for the works submitted. The material has also identified many issues that are important to the investigation and has been included in an appendix in this exegesis.

While the initial research for this project included the feminist artists of the '60s, particularly the early Pattern and Decoration artists such as Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago and the role they played in emphasizing women's re-emergence from a modernist past, it does not seek to engage any further with that well-defined quest, or other feminist theories. It does, however, draw from them the importance they placed on the craft-based element of the hand-made as well as decoration as a method to express intimacy and individuality. The exegesis also comments informally on the changing role of women as traditional decorators, which in my opinion, is as a result of their increasing participation in the workforce. Despite the fact that ornament is a key element in the research, it is beyond the role of this exegesis to provide an in depth analysis of the history of pattern.

Finally, by developing a body of work from the research findings that both utilizes and challenges the traditional white cube of the gallery space while using strategies that provide a subjective experience for the viewer, in my opinion, this research has highlighted that the contemporary home is becoming a space of order, conformity and anonymity rather than being a lived, experienced environment that expresses our individuality. The absence of ornament from the domestic sphere is just one of the consequences felt by this change. By permitting viewers to actively participate in the work through offering choice as well as allowing participants to observe others, this project aims to make them more aware of this phenomenon.

Chapter one provides an outline of the central argument; the impact that the diminution of decoration in domestic interior spaces has had on individual identity and our subsequent feelings about these spaces. It introduces Juhani Pallasmaa's early writings on the phenomenology of home that have become significant in the final realization of the works. The relevant theories and

observations associated with decoration and ornamentation, gender issues and consumer culture are also discussed, drawing on the writings of E.H. Gombrich and James Trilling, Penny Sparke and Christopher Reed as well as the early modernist ideologies explored in the writings of Adolph Loos and through the architecture of Le Corbusier.

Chapter two discusses the strategies used to investigate this issue, providing an overview of the reasons why there was a move away from the traditional print and object-based works to installation and interactive-based works. It also introduces Nicolas Bourriaud's concepts on relational art as well as Claire Bishop's overview of recent theories on installation. Secondly, this chapter discusses relevant artists who are contextually important to the project: namely Michael Lin, Daniel Buren, Yayoi Kasama and Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

Chapter three outlines how the work was pursued and offers an overview of the change in direction that occurred as a result of the research. It describes the project experimentation and summarizes the individual works and how the research led to their making.

The conclusion recapitulates the journey through the research project. It summarises how the research strategies and methodology moved to suit the investigation's findings while the work produced has remained a derivative of print media. It ends by outlining the works that will proceed beyond this endeavour.

## PART I: The Central Argument

The diminution of decoration in the home began with the modernist critique of ornament. Two of the main opponents of ornament were architects, writers and critics - Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier. Their contribution to the debate significantly altered the modernist perception of architecture and design, and their legacy continues to have authority today.

Adolph Loos in his somewhat controversial 1908 manifesto, 'Ornament and Crime', vilified ornament and linked the use of ornament and decoration to primitive cultures and referred to anyone who adopted it as backward. This, too, has resonance in contemporary society. In social orders that are increasingly forward-looking, references to the past are often denounced as regressive, reiterating the modernist doctrine of elitism. Adolph Loos would have been the ideal character for James Trilling's term, 'cosmophobia'. In his book *Ornament: A Modern Perspective*, 2003, he identified the term as a condition that involves a deep-seated fear of ornament often manifested by a profound distrust of artifice and brought about by cultural, economic, political and religious prejudices.<sup>1</sup>

Loos justified his hostility against ornament by noting that we had lost our sense of decorative history when he stated that, 'As ornament is no longer linked with our culture, it is also no longer an expression of our culture.'<sup>2</sup> Although somewhat derogatory for the most part, his farsighted views still hold weight today. This research will disclose that, because ornament now has less historical meaning to us as individuals, consumers of domestic items are often confused when confronted by decorative choice. It is my opinion that they cannot intuitively draw links to history and memory and, more often than not, opt for a plainer alternative. Could the question then be asked, are we losing our pattern history?

The plainer styles, industrial materials and muted colours in current contemporary interiors would have suited Loos, who strongly reiterated that ornament hid reality behind a deceptive façade. (Fig.1)

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<sup>1</sup> Trilling, James. *Ornament: A Modern Perspective*. Washington: University of Washington Press, 2003. pp. 3, 233.

<sup>2</sup> Loos, Adolph. 'Ornament and Crime'. In Munz, Ludwig. *Adolph Loos: Pioneer of Modern Architecture*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1966. p. 229.



**Fig.1** Freedom sales catalogue, Winter 2005 pp. 2-3

E.H. Gombrich, a loyal advocate of ornament, discusses the belief that decoration causes a distraction which undermines rationality, blinding the individual. Loos and other modernist designers have argued, 'Ornament is dangerous precisely because it dazzles us and tempts the mind to submit without proper reflection.'<sup>3</sup>

While this idea is true in some circumstances, contrary to this, I would argue that because decoration and ornament are complex in nature - the eye lingers longer to establish meaning and allows the viewer to reflect, not only on the surface complexity but also to dwell on its meaning, its relationship to the space in which it is located, and to the individual who created it. Multifaceted interior spaces immerse the viewer in the very being of the person who created them, sending complex messages or readings relating to that individual. Based on this research, it is my view that ornament *reveals* personality by illuminating our individual complexities while plainness muffles the multifarious nature of the individual and allows the decorator to hide their true distinctiveness.

After his highly influential essay, in which Loos pronounced and condemned ornament, there was a huge shift in cultural thinking regarding decoration and ornament. One of the next generation's influential entities who sought change was Le Corbusier. Heavily influenced by Loos, he further condemned ornament, by advocating function as truth in architecture; he decried decoration as deceptive and having no place in a modern world and encouraged architects to design 'a machine for living in'<sup>4</sup>. Building

<sup>3</sup> Gombrich, E.H. *A Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1979. p.17.

<sup>4</sup> Curtis, William J.R. *Modern Architecture Since 1900*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. London: Phaidon Press, 1996. p. 171.

developers promoted these pared-back models and mass-produced buildings which had no intimate relation to place; the designs lacked consideration of cultures or the people who would inhabit these buildings. In the rush to take advantage of the economical building designs made available by the early modernist architects, enthusiastic developers utilized them without the same consideration and critique of the strict design principles, that had been mandatory in early modernist ideologies. Le Corbusier's *Unité de Habitation* designed in Marseilles, France in 1947-53, is one such design that was emulated throughout the western world for post-war housing. (Fig 2a)



**Fig. 2a Le Corbusier**  
Unité d'Habitation,  
Marseilles 1947-53. Image: Curtis p. 438



**Fig. 2b Minoru Yamasaki** Pruitt Igoe,  
Low cost housing, 1950, St Louis Missouri  
Demolished 1972. Image: Curtis p. 448

One important end result of this design was the Pruitt Igoe 1950 housing development in Missouri USA. The building was so alienating to its inhabitants that it was unlivable and was eventually destroyed in 1972, symbolically defining an end of modernism in architecture. <sup>5</sup> (Fig. 2b)

Disturbingly, a pastiche of the modernist style seems to have been adopted by manufacturers producing many cheap reproducible domestic items for the low to middle socio-economic market. (Fig. 3) Coupled with the commercial imperatives of retail chains, this has led to the same unfortunate outcomes that modernist architecture suffered, with furniture and interior items that are inexpensive, expressionless and universal, and it is my view that this reflects nothing of the end user.

Paul Goldburger, in an essay for the *New York Times Magazine*, laments that there is a high cost involved for this accessibility and states that:

*...we pay the price in a gradual but very real loss of variation: our houses..., become part of mass culture, wherein we all increasingly display and consume the same thing.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* p.449.

<sup>6</sup> Collins, Jim. sites Goldberger, Paul. 'The Sameness of Things' from *New York Times Magazine* April 6 1997 'No (Popular) Place Like Home?' in Collins, Jim. Ed. *High-Pop: Making Culture into Popular Entertainment*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2002. p. 186





Fig. 3 *Fantastic Furniture Catalogue 2005*

Many writers, historians and critics have continued to debate and condemn this ‘universalization’ as an observable fact of globalization that points to a more serious effect on our culture. Paul Ricoeur stated, as early as 1965, that:

*The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional culture...but...the creative nucleus of great cultures...<sup>7</sup>*

The artist Monika Nador, who lives and works in Sao Paulo, Brazil, addresses this sameness. She paints with rural and urban communities in her native Brazil as well as in Cuba and Mexico. Her work empowers displaced communities by returning familiar visual imagery to their homes in order to reacquaint them with their history, culture and memory. (Fig. 4) Ivo Mesquita writes in the Sydney Biennale catalogue:

*...this work aims to activate the foundations of the individual, the critical subject, the citizen who is able to challenge the process of homogenisation and control in contemporary society.<sup>8</sup>*

<sup>7</sup> Ricoeur, Paul. ‘Universal Civilization and National Cultures’. *History and Truth*. trans. Chas A. Kelbley. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965. pp.276-7.

<sup>8</sup> Mesquita, Ivo. 2004 Sydney Biennale catalogue *On reason and Emotion* p.150.



**Fig. 4 Monika Nador** *Maclovio Rojas, Tijuana – InSite 2000* 2000  
Acrylic paint on wall  
Image: Courtesy of the artist, and *On Reason and Emotion* Catalogue  
p. 152.

In support of this argument, Finnish architect, historian and writer, Juhani Pallasmaa, criticizes the diminution of the complexities that make up our homes and adds that, in order to preserve our identity and the very ‘essence’ of home, the ‘substance of home’ needs to be ‘secreted... upon the framework of the dwelling by the dweller...’<sup>9</sup> This substance frequently takes the form of ornamentation and decorative pattern, which often comes from our idiosyncratic histories that we capture and retain. When used in decorating a house for example, these patterns provide informative links to past familial connections, cultures and memories; in effect, describing our personal history.

James Trilling notes that even before we select a pattern or ornament, the decision *to use* it in the first place identifies that we mean to share the wealth of meaning it imparts, which is no less powerful even though it is often distanced from our immediate historical or cultural past.<sup>10</sup> In relation to this, my family has always maintained a strong association with Scotland and our clan tartan. Similarly, I have a strong connection to my grandmother’s aesthetic, the English cabbage rose, a traditional English design that reflected her heritage and is used within this submission.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Pallasmaa, Juhani. ‘Identity, Intimacy and Domicile: Notes on the phenomenology of home’. *Finish Architectural Review*, 1994. [http://www.uiah.fi/presentation/history/e\\_ident.htm](http://www.uiah.fi/presentation/history/e_ident.htm). p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Trilling. op.cit., p.75.

<sup>11</sup> *Rosa centifolia*, is normally attributed to the title ‘cabbage rose’ used in English interior decoration from the eighteenth century. However, in this submission, the more open *Floribunda* rose has been used.

But these important links to personal history are not as profound as they once were. Pallasmaa goes on to argue that there is a 'meaninglessness' or 'existentialist vacuum' that exists in our culture, highlighting man's loss of his individual identity.<sup>12</sup> This he portrays in reference not only to art, but also to architecture and interior design.

Intuitively seizing on this loss of cultural links to the past, commercial enterprises have developed marketing strategies around our uncertainties, creating trends, peer allegiances and playing on a 'must have' desire in order to gain economic rewards. The mass production of identity is reiterated in Penny Sparke's studies of cultural taste. She notes that from the '80s onwards:

*...designers helped to provide ready-made cultural identities through the goods they consumed and which customers appropriated and used.*<sup>13</sup>

As middle-class consumers spend the majority of their time earning to acquire commodities, the commercial market promotes an easy alternative that takes away the 'doing' in creating interiors. This 'doing' used to be within the female domain in the household but, with more women entering the workforce, this role has been reduced and replaced by the ready-made.<sup>14</sup> With the invention of the department store in the late nineteenth century and, more recently, the derivative 'homemaker store', the passive role of the homemaker is emphasised. The effort of buying and creating is as limited as the designs of the commodities, and the relentless barrage of advertising, easy payment schemes and the convenience of buying under one roof, creates an easy alternative for time-poor consumers. The availability of mass-produced, characterless items in the global world coupled with these timesaving strategies all exist, in my view, at the expense of the *experience* of decorating.

Pallasmaa, who has continually informed my ongoing research into the home, argues that even though retailers tell us that there is such a thing as an instant interior, in reality the home cannot be made 'at once' – it must evolve slowly over a period of time. He states:

<sup>12</sup> Pallasmaa. *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Sparke, Penny. *As Long as it's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste*. London: Pandora, 1995. pp. 222-23.

<sup>14</sup> The 'ready-made' is, for the purposes of this exegesis, a form of consumable that is thought out or grouped together by someone other than the buyer and takes away creative effort, making choice a passive exercise. Many consumables marketed today are grouped to assist the homebuyer and, while this strategy has been around since retailing began, coupled with current aggressive marketing campaigns by retailers emphasises convenience and encourages submissive creativity.

*It is evident that home is not an object, a building, but a diffuse and complex condition that integrates memories and images, desires and fears, the past and the present. A home is also a set of rituals, personal rhythms and routines of everyday life. Home cannot be produced all at once; it has its time dimension and continuum and is a gradual product of the family's and individual adaptation to the world. A home cannot, thus, become a marketable product. Current advertisements of furniture shops offering a chance "to renew one's home at one go" are absurd – they amount to a psychologist's advertisement to renew the mental contents of the patient's mind at one go.<sup>15</sup>*

When researching reactions to ornament at a decorating store, I found there were many customers who were apprehensive about selecting ornamented items for the home.<sup>16</sup> One fabric wholesaler reiterated this, observing that consumers are now in a 'safe mode', and are not willing to stand out, speak up or be significantly above the crowd. Small suggestions of pattern in interiors, such as patterned cushions, give just enough information without making our choice stand out. Equally, he noted that the patterns that were most popular were those that were toned down and based on a pattern of a similar colour; a 'tone-on-tone' effect. (Fig. 5)



**Fig. 5** 'Tone on tone' fabric showing figure-ground similarities.  
Image: the author

These references are reiterated in the works presented in this submission, where I have employed various strategies to evoke the loss of individuality, such as dissolving the pattern into the background so that it becomes almost indiscernible. Some of the works also use materials that speak of hidden identity. They are 'available cultural products'<sup>17</sup> not intended for decoration such as pink batts which are normally behind walls, hidden in cavities; curtain lining and lining wallpaper, normally used to cover unstable walls before painting. It is intended that this disrupted use of such materials would effectively imbue the them with new meaning, re-contextualising the

<sup>15</sup> Pallasmaa. op.cit., p.4

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix II for record of interviews

<sup>17</sup> Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction*. New York: Lukas & Sternburg, 2002. p. 13.



intended use to play with an idea of the undisclosed characteristics of an individual, an idea so often not expressed in modern interiors.

Another strategy I have used for implying a loss of individuality is repetition. Gombrich deals with this issue when writing about the Pop artists of the '60s. In particular, he draws us to Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe* 1962, stressing that any repetition of a motif or an object devalues its meaning, while conversely isolating it 'enhances its potential meaning.' (Fig. 6) When viewing repetition, we are faced with what Gombrich calls 'lawful assembly' and we reduce our perception of the separate element by only taking samples - like listening to half a conversation - wherein meaning becomes shrouded. Gombrich surmises, 'The perception of regularity, of repetition and redundancy, presents a great economy'.<sup>18</sup> This issue adds weight to the argument in this research that, as individuals in a mass-consumer society, the uniqueness of our selves has become eclipsed by sameness, as we become mass.



**Fig. 6** Andy Warhol *Marilyn Monroe* 1962  
Image: Gombrich p. 152.

One of the early findings in this research was a significant change in the gender roles within the home that ultimately affected home decoration. Christopher Reed, in his introduction to an anthology of essays on the suppression of the decorative in Modern art and architecture, notes that it is within the home environment that we primarily establish our gendered

<sup>18</sup> Gombrich. op.cit., p. 152.

identity. However, the modern home environment has become a place where such gender norms are being questioned.<sup>19</sup>

Considerable changes to family domestic structures, caused in the most part by an increase in the number of women working, means that there is little time to resource and furnish the home as a place of refuge, comfort and tradition as was seen in previous generations.<sup>20</sup> While women remain involved in the decision-making, men too are now seeking an input into decorating the family home. This was confirmed in interviews I conducted with staff from decorating and design stores during this research.<sup>21</sup> They observed changes in customer buying patterns and noted that the situation has led to a decline in the overtly patterned and decorated interior as men, often accompanying women, are increasingly involved in decorating the home. As a result of this research, I have formed the opinion that the impact of this dual decision making process is that it has generated a more neutral space that does not reflect the once dominant market and taste of feminine homemakers.

Another factor contributing to the diminution of ornament in the home has been the emergence of serious issues of survival. With recent natural disasters, global terrorism, threats of disease and ongoing environmental concerns in the latter part of the twentieth century, the importance placed on 'trivial' issues such as femininity, domesticity and subsequently the finer points of ornament have become less significant. Penny Sparke identified similar issues in her 1995 book on consumer culture and suggested that some of these issues overrode the material culture of taste by arguing that, 'Issues of survival have replaced those of pleasure and identity and in their train comes an inevitable re-masculinisation of the world of material culture'.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time however, ornament is often associated with novelty and euphoria, and one could then also ask, against the rise of issues of survival, could this then encourage a return of decoration as a form of distraction or escapism? Could the euphoric effect of ornament be used to temporarily assuage fear and dispel the trepidation of our mortality?

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<sup>19</sup> Reed, Christopher. *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1996. p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Sparke. *op.cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix II for record of interviews.

<sup>22</sup> Sparke, *op.cit.*, p. 234.

## PART II: Context

The research for this project can be divided into two distinct phases or modes of thinking. The first phase involved creating prints and objects that used elements and materials from the home, such as pink batts, stud walls and concrete. These materials were traditionally non-decorative and referenced artists such as Rachael Whiteread and Caroline Eskdale. The prints and objects were to be viewed as entities within themselves, as experiments with the materials and were not overtly conceptual or installation-based. (Fig.7)



**Fig. 7 Fiona Lee** *Poured* 2003  
Concrete  
Image: the author

The second phase saw the change in direction from making objects and prints to delivering works that centred on the audience's feeling or relationship to the work and, as such, the works became more installation-based and conceptual in nature. The issue of active engagement was beginning to form the central core of the research, particularly when the investigation became linked with the effects of current consumer culture removing the *thinking* involved in decorating the domestic sphere. At this time the research strategies were also becoming more interactive, taking the form of a social exploration; an exploration that was more engaged with the individuals and key personnel associated with domestic decorating such as consumers, retailers and decorators.

It was this realisation, that we each have a personal relationship with ornament, that led the project in a new direction. Even though there are suggested links with the early Dada and Fluxus critique of the commodification of art, I became interested in finding new strategies to visually articulate the relationship with ornament. New theories had evolved out of Europe in the 1990s that were beginning to inform this research and I began to look towards Nicolas Bourriaud's theories on relational aesthetics.

The idea of creating environments (equated to domestic rooms or ‘bays’ in a homemaker store) began to take place and the logical step toward installation-based works began to evolve. Installation as a form of art practice allows viewers to engage with the work on a more intellectual level if they wish, but it also permits a connection to be made at a more rudimentary level. Claire Bishop, in her recent book on installation, defines the genre according to four components. Two of these are particularly relevant to this project: ‘activated spectatorship’ and ‘heightened perception’.<sup>23</sup> In the following section Bourriaud’s and Bishop’s theories will be discussed in turn.

### **Relational Aesthetics and Postproduction**

My readings on relational art followed on from one of my early protagonists, Finnish architect, critic and historian, Juhani Pallasmaa. His writings - predominantly on the phenomenology of domestic space and, in particular, his essay *The Geometry of Feeling*, (1993), wherein he describes our fundamental relationship and experience with the home - informed my early practice and seamlessly led to Bourriaud’s theories.

Relational art deals with works of art that display the ‘whole of human relations and their social context’<sup>24</sup>. Artworks present readings of sociability and conviviality, read by the viewer based on their own understandings. Relational Aesthetics is a theoretical model where artworks are evaluated on the idea of inter-human relations conveyed via the work and where the viewer is open to enter into a dialogue or engagement with the work and thus complement it.<sup>25</sup>

Mark Pennings concurs with this in his paper ‘Relational Aesthetics: Critical Culture’ where he states that in relational art, the objects are still brought into play, but as incidental rather than central, and the art is more concerned with the relations *between* the objects rather than the object itself. This form of art opens up an avenue for contact, interaction, negotiation and consideration instead of relying on the aesthetic sensibilities of the passive onlooker – it is a form of ‘operating realism’ where *the experience* is the product.<sup>26</sup>

Juhani Pallasmaa, in his important 1985 essay, *The Geometry of Feeling* earlier identified similar concerns when he spoke of architecture:

<sup>23</sup> Bishop, Claire. *Installation Art: A Critical History*. London: Tate Publishing, 2005. pp. 48-81, 102-127.

<sup>24</sup> Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Paris: Les Presses Du Reel, 2002. p. 113.

<sup>25</sup> Bourriaud, op.cit., p.112.

<sup>26</sup> Pennings, Mark. *Relational Aesthetics: Critical Culture*. Conference paper for ‘Transforming Aesthetics’ Conference, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 8 July, 2005.



*The phenomenon of architecture is founded on verbs rather than nouns. The approaching of the house, not the façade, the act of entering, not the door: the act of looking out of the window, not the window itself; or the act of gathering around rather than the hearth or the table as such seem to trigger our strongest emotions.<sup>27</sup>*

It is the experience rather than the object or the aesthetic receptivity that is at issue in this research. This position has become an explicit point of reference for many contemporary artists seeking new ways to engage with their audiences in recent times.

Another of Bourriaud's concepts which influenced my project is that of 'postproduction'. Postproduction, a term that is normally associated with the finishing off or post-production of video, film and television, is in Bourriaud's conception, a process where artists use (as their methodology) pre-existing elements of culture or previous artworks that are then reinterpreted to create new meanings. The piecing together of cultural products with pre-existing works of art and overlaying ideas of others has been a strategy of artists for generations and Bourriaud does not deny that this is not new. However, he maintains that artists are now deliberately expressing 'the changing mental space'<sup>28</sup> that has been brought about by the vast growth of, and access to, information technology and an increasingly global culture. By using the methods of relational art and postproduction, artists use available cultural products as tools of connection, engaging the audience and the art in new forms of association. He describes this as being a 'tertiary' form of art, as distinct from when artists use 'primary' materials and ideas for their works.<sup>29</sup>

Bourriaud opened up a new direction for the investigation, redirecting it towards the field of human interaction when he pointed out the key issue at hand; that if we are to avoid standardization and predictability, (all issues that come about through, and as a result of, our loss of identity) we must not play along with marketing strategies (advertising ploys) that have turned our relationships with each other into 'one or two simple principles that can be monitored and repeated' for commercial gain.<sup>30</sup>

One of the key issues to come out of this research is an intention to create a mode of art practice that transforms the passive audience member into an

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<sup>27</sup> Pallasmaa, op.cit., p.4.

<sup>28</sup> Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> ibid, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. op.cit., p. 9.

active participant. Rather than provide a set of cryptic clues as for a crossword, this project aims to allow the viewer to gain what they want from the interaction with the work. Tony Godfrey, in his book *Conceptual Art*, suggests, 'The work is presented as a proposition – what you see is what you make of it.'<sup>31</sup> Each viewer will bring to the work his or her own history and knowledge and that will provide the basis from which they will interpret the work. Ironically, the work may also leave the viewer totally unaware of the participation with the work.

### Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Bourriaud's account of Felix Gonzalez-Torres' sweet spills exemplifies his conception of relational aesthetics. In placing objects of desire in a gallery and assigning the suggestion of a 'free for all', the focus then is not so much directed at the sweets as objects in themselves, but on the exchange that occurs.<sup>32</sup> When confronted by Torres's sweets heaped invitingly in the corner of the gallery, many gallery viewers are at a loss as to what to do – there are so many sweets and there is the temptation to sneakily take one. Comforted by the knowledge that it doesn't make any difference to the 'look' of the pile because it is so big, they greedily partake in the destruction of the pile. The astute viewer however realizes that if everyone takes one of the sweets, ultimately the work will be changed and, not only will the reading of the work become different, but the viewer will have contributed to its change. They will have had ultimately altered the outcome of the work. (Fig. 8)



**Fig. 8 Felix Gonzalez-Torres**  
*Untitled (Placebo – Landscape – for Roni)* 1993  
 Image: Bishop p. 114.

<sup>31</sup> Godfrey, Tony. *Conceptual Art*. London: Phaidon Press, 1998. p. 130.

<sup>32</sup> Wood, Paul. *Conceptual Art*. London: Tate Publishing, 2002. p. 395.

Andrew MacNamara, in his essay on the relational aspects of Torres's work, recognizes that the impact of his work lies in the challenge it poses to the viewer.<sup>33</sup> The taking away of an element of the work alludes to loss, so a choice or a decision has to be made, as to whether one will be a part of this work or simply remain an observer. The viewer ultimately completes the work by making a decision to be or not to be a part of the work.

The idea that the artist encourages the viewer to exact some power over the final concept becomes a key point to note in some of my works. With *Where have all the cabbages gone?* 2005-06, the viewer is tempted to taking a catalogue, and in *FREE sit* 2006, the viewer is free to sit within the work, thus becoming part of the work.

### Installation Art

This aspect of viewer engagement is extensively written about in Claire Bishop's historical and contemporary overview of installation art. Bishop argues that because of the many and varied ways artists have used the term 'installation' to describe their work in recent years, its meaning has become blurred. However, in essence, she suggests of installation art that:

*Rather than imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an embodied viewer, whose sense of touch, smell and sound, are as heightened as their sense of vision.*<sup>34</sup>

In an effort to unravel the genre into definitive forms, and provide a clear descriptive account, she re-examines installation art and provides four main categories defined by the type of experience the artist structures for the viewer. Two of these, 'activated spectatorship' and 'heightened perception' are pertinent to this investigation; both involving the viewer and how their experience with the work becomes the subject of the work.

'Activated spectatorship' is where the viewer is given a function or part within the work in order that the aims of the artwork be realized. For example, with *Where have all the cabbages gone?* 2005-06 viewers are tempted into taking a mass produced catalogue from the pile and their passive relationship with the work is transformed into an active one.

<sup>33</sup> MacNamara, Andrew. 'Echoes: Felix Gonzales-Torres: as a precursor of relational aesthetics.' *Transforming Aesthetics*. Conference paper, 8 July 2005, Art Gallery of NSW.

<sup>34</sup> Bishop, op.cit., p 6.

Bishop's theory behind 'heightened perception', interestingly, is reminiscent of the writings of French Philosopher Merleau-Ponty who was a significant influence for artists of the '60s.<sup>35</sup> The similarity occurs where the viewer's experience and sense of awareness of the work and their position within it is heightened. In the case of my work, *Toneontone*, 2006, the deadening of extraneous sound by the sound baths amplifies the viewer's sense of their own presence within the room. Or, as in the case of another of my works, *FREE sit*, 2006, where, even though the viewer is given permission to engage with the work in the title, they are made to feel alienated from the work as a result of the noise created when the viewer walks over the crisp white flooring, which creates the feeling that they are intruding in an exclusive space.

It is intended that the strategic use of installation would encourage the viewer to become more conscious of decoration; it heightens their awareness through its overwhelming presence as in *Toneontone*, or, conversely, by trying to obliterate it in *FREE sit*. These strategies metaphorically illustrate Bourriaud's ideas when he states that we are, 'singularities in a more standardized world'.<sup>36</sup> It is hoped that the viewer's engagement with scribbled-out decoration also accentuates the homogenous nature of current decorating styles, where the very 'essence' of home, as Pallasmaa states, is not being experienced in modern homes.

Bishop further adds that artists who produce installation art, base it around the concept of *decentring* the subject, (fragmenting the subject and not allowing one perspective to dominate the view of the work) which allows the viewer to read and engage with the work on a variety of levels. Tony Godfrey, when speaking about conceptual forms of art, states that '...active engagement is also demanded on a mental level, the viewer has to become the thinker... the viewer stands in intellectual discomfort'.<sup>37</sup> The three mentioned artworks above each heighten the viewer's conscious state of awareness of being situated in a gallery space and, subsequently, the ethical behaviour that is required of them as they interact with the works.

Unlike installation art that can involve a form of relational understanding, our homes are becoming like an installation *of* art that leaves the occupant with a form of disengagement from their home. The following installation artists

<sup>35</sup> Bishop sites in *Installation Art*, p. 10. the English translation of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's book the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

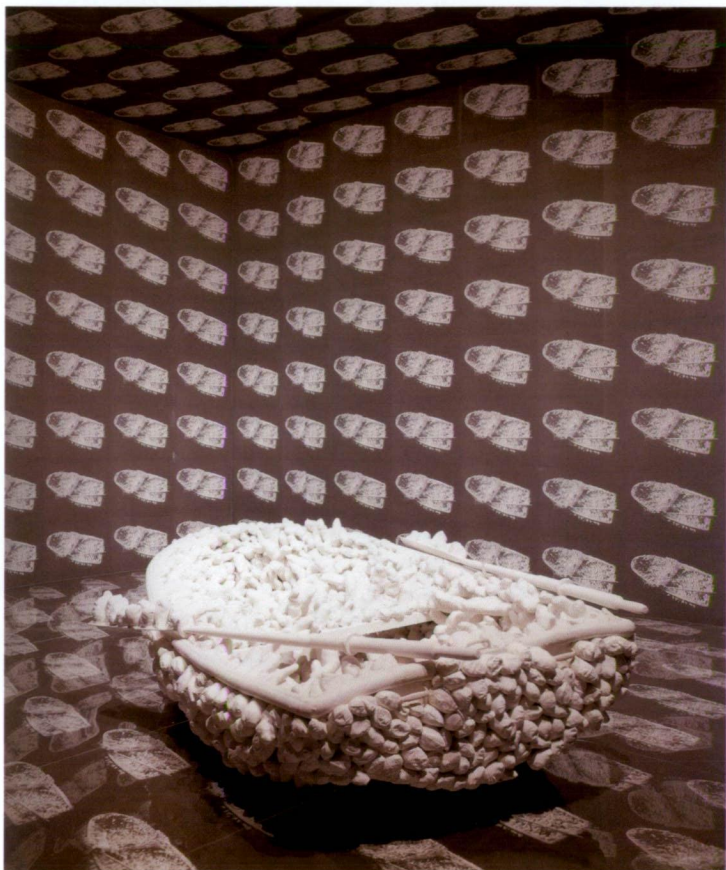
<sup>36</sup> Bourriaud, Nicolas. Abstract for *Transforming Aesthetics*. Conference 7-9 July 2005, Art Gallery of NSW.

<sup>37</sup> Godfrey, Tony. *Conceptual Art*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998. p. 143.

whose practice is relevant to my project are Yayoi Kasama, Daniel Buren and Michael Ming Hong Lin.

**Yayoi Kasama**

The immersion of the viewer into an environment of overwhelming multiple pattern is an approach that Yayoi Kasama used to emphasize distinctiveness.



**Fig. 9 Yayoi Kasama** *Aggregation: One Thousand Boat Show* (detail) 1963  
Sewn stuffed fabric, wooden row boat, 999 silkscreen images on paper,  
Image: Yayoi Kasama p. 57.

Kasama’s work, *Aggregation: One Thousand Boat Show* 1963, (Fig. 9) typifies an installation that draws in the viewer by immersing them into what seems to be an endless array of the same image. The work, her first public installation, held at the Gertrude Stein Gallery in New York, was a stance against what she emphasised as a highly mechanized standard of art being produced as a result of Pop’s approach to consumer culture.<sup>38</sup> The reproduction of the image of a boat, highly decorated with white handmade phallic objects, draws attention to the idea of mass-reproduction but ‘argues

<sup>38</sup> Hoptman, Laura. ‘Yayoi Kasama: A Reckoning’. in Kasama, Yayoi. *Yayoi Kasama*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2000. p. 56.



against anonymous, industrial seriality and champions process over object, experience over consumption<sup>39</sup> by propagating the idea of handicraft.

The inevitable similarities of repetition between this work and Warhol's *Cow Wallpaper*, 1966 confine themselves to the idea of mass reproduction. (Fig.10) From there they part company with Warhol relishing in the anonymity of reproduction, while Kasama steadfastly holds onto individual representation and the craft of production. The number of boats in the work is defined by displaying the original object as the 1000<sup>th</sup> edition. This implies an end or limit to the production - something that mass-production does not. Even so, the Kasama work reiterates the power of repetitive promotional advertising and marketing as a method of encouraging consumerist traits that diminish individual distinctiveness. While repetition can be a strategy to emphasise, in my work it is intended to be read as a diminution of the individual.



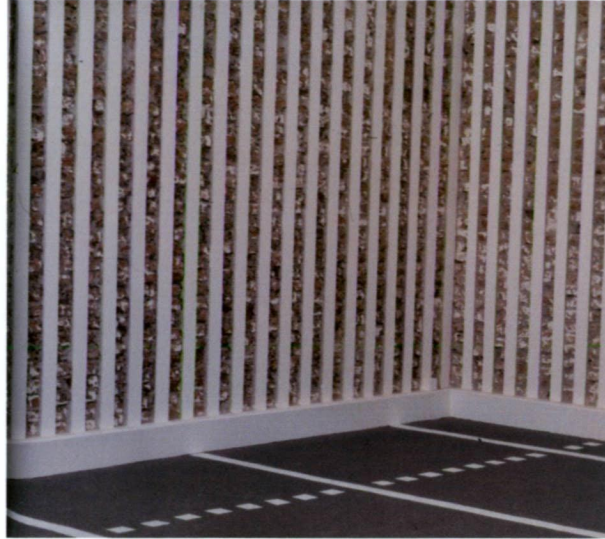
**Fig. 10 Andy Warhol *Cow Wallpaper* 1966**  
 Serigraph printed on wallpaper  
 Dia Art Foundation, Dia: Beacon, Beacon, NY.  
 Image: [http://www.artincontext.org/the\\_library](http://www.artincontext.org/the_library)

The most overpowering part of this Kasama work is the *experience* of being totally immersed in an environment that is densely crowded with the repetition of one image. Floor, walls and ceiling are covered in black and white copies of an image that, in its totality, becomes visually overbearing.

### **Daniel Buren**

Artists like Daniel Buren, as O'Doherty observes, also challenge the idea of the gallery or exhibition site by initiating a new intellectual engagement with the space.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 59.



**Fig. 11 Daniel Buren** *Le Pavillon Coupé, Découpé, Taillé, Gravé.*  
*(The Pavillion Cut, Cut up, Carved, Engraved)* 1986.  
 Engraved walls.  
 Image: Lelong p. 124.

Buren's use of reductive stripes has become unmistakable as his signature style, a style through which he stamps not only his own identity, but also that of his culture, onto the gallery or site. (Fig.11 & 12) His association with the pattern concretises his identity, so much so that the stripe is instantly recognizable as his monogram.

Buren's use of the plain stripe is somewhat paradoxical since stripes in themselves seem to suggest standardization and reduction of individuality, yet Buren turns these anonymous stripes into his unique signature.

In his works, the identity he has established for himself not only reflects who he is but, by association, implicates him solidly within French culture. The striped motif is adaptable to any surface and has the flexibility to be shown anywhere, either within the white walls of the gallery, as in *Le Pavillon Coupé, Découpé, Taillé, Gravé* or in an open public space, giving his message out to a wider audience. O'Doherty explains:

*Art is also contained by another social agreement...called style. The stripes, which identify a personality with a motif and a motif with art, imitate the way style works. ... Style, we know, extracts from the work an essence which is negotiable cross-culturally. Through style as Andre Malraux demonstrated, all cultures talk to you.*<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> O'Doherty, Brian. *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Expanded Edition. Berkley: University of California Press, 1999. p. 95.





**Fig. 12 Daniel Buren, *Les Deux Plateaux* (Two Plateaus) 1985-86**  
Sculpture in situ, Palais-Royal Paris.  
Image: Lelong. p. 101.

In *Le Pavillon Coupé, Découpé, Taille, Gravé*, the work seems to place credence on the materiality of the wall. Buren forms an identity out of ordinary materials; the cut up, carved and engraved walls made from common building materials have resonance with the works in this project.

### **Michael Ming Hong Lin**

Just as Buren's stripes are synonymous with French culture and, subsequently his own personal style, so does the artist Michael Ming Hong Lin use a similar strategy. Lin recreates large-scale imagery taken from the traditional Taiwanese fabric designs associated with the domestic. He transports them onto the walls of institutional and non-domestic architecture, effectively interrupting the intimate, private nature of the intended design by showing the works in such spaces. Rhana Davonport says of Lin's work:

*The artist disturbs notions of the exotic and the familiar and plays upon ideas surrounding the exoticisation of ordinary materials in extraordinary circumstances. He forces monumental architecture and everyday fabrics to meet in unlikely and provocative juxtapositions.*<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Davenport, Rhana. Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art catalogue, 2002. pp. 70 - 73.





**Fig. 13 Michael Lin** *ICA Taipei 5.27-8.26.2001*  
Image: Asia Pacific Triennial catalogue 2002 p. 73.

In this work, *ICA Taipei 5.27-8.26.2001*, the image at first glance seems normal – if not ordinary. (Fig. 13) It is hard to grasp an overall view of the work in photographs, but looking closer the viewer senses that the flowered motifs are huge, warming an obviously stark environment and placing emphasis on the form of the space. The colours are garish, as is often the case in traditional Asian designs, but the works are still subtle enough to leave the viewer struggling to identify the shift between normality and the obscure.



**Fig. 14 Michael Lin**, *House* 1998  
Emulsion Wall painting, Bamboo Curtain Studio Taipei, Taiwan  
Image. [www. Galerie-Meile-ch/MichaelLin](http://www.Galerie-Meile-ch/MichaelLin)

The floral designs, taken from mass-produced domestic products, become familiar motifs that are associated with Taiwanese culture and individual memory, similar to the work of Monika Nador as discussed in chapter one. By placing this imagery onto austere surfaces, such as the concrete wall of the Bamboo Curtain Studio in Taipei, the artist creates a paradox by domesticating the space. Titled *House*, 1998, (Fig. 14) the cold warehouse-like wall of the gallery has been emphasized and made recognizable. Lin creates an identity for a surface that would normally be seen as commonplace, producing enchantment out of the ordinary. The works submitted for this project play on beautifying the ordinary, particularly through the use of materials that are normally considered mundane, such as the pink batts, curtain lining and lining wallpaper.

The ideology of Modernist designers to rid the world of frivolity and ornamentation is parodied in Lin's work titled, *Cigarette Break* 1999, which has some resonance with this project. (Fig. 15) The minimalist design of the timeless classic, *The Corbusier Chair*, is challenged when Lin covers a pair of these chairs with an overwhelming floral fabric. The beautiful 'paintings' of matching fabric further adds to the work by perverting historical models of high art.



**Fig.15 Michael Lin** *Cigarette Break* 1999.  
Upholstered Chairs, Pentalite print on wood.  
Collection; The artist  
Image: Australia Pacific Triennial catalogue 2002.

Lin's art often takes the forms of domestic floor coverings, cushions, armchairs and tables. This effectively enhances his work further by inviting the viewer to walk over and to sit or lie down on many of his pieces. He draws the viewer into the space as Vivian Rehberg from Galerie Meile describes: 'one walks across it to get somewhere else or to look at something

else'.<sup>42</sup> This realization of the work further breaks down the barrier between the institution and the viewer.

A contextually significant aspect of Lin's art is how he plays with viewers' emotions, drawing on feelings of doubt, guilt and contravention, making the viewer sense they are about to commit a misdemeanour when they interact with the works. The tension associated with trespass (O'Doherty 49) becomes significant as Rehberg concurs:

*What appears as benign 'soft pop', or easy-listening music for the eyes, in fact turns out to be a site of considerate transgression. Transgression is initiated the moment the visitor places her foot onto a work by Lin (and who doesn't still feel a moments hesitation before reaching out to touch, or before stepping onto a displayed object).<sup>43</sup>*

Lin's works draw viewers in, play with their emotions, and allow for relationships to take place both between the work and the viewer and between the viewers themselves. They become places for social events, discussions and other forms of human interaction. These interactions within the space, commanded from the audience, are what are contextually important to this project.

### Summary

Art that re-conceptualises societal and cultural issues and engages human interaction has undergone a renaissance in Europe in the last few years. The works of Lin, Buren, Kasama and Gonzalez Torres provide new insights into the way we interact with art. It is an art that relies on a self-determining level of awareness created by viewer interaction. This is also central to my work as discussed in the next chapter.

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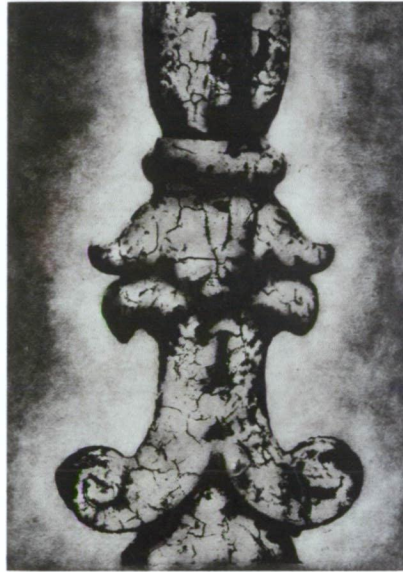
<sup>42</sup> Rehberg, Vivian. [www.Galerie-Meile-ch/MichaelLin](http://www.Galerie-Meile-ch/MichaelLin)

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*



**PART III: How The Work Was Pursued**

From past experiences in interior design and architectural studies, the home and our relationship to it have become a main concern of my work. In my arts practice, I have continually looked at the subject of my own identity by pursuing family history and memories, and by investigating the phenomenological aspects of home as suggested by Pallasmaa. (Fig. 17) The print is an integral part of my work and within this project the focus has moved from creating smaller scale prints to producing works that are more aligned towards an experience of physical space.

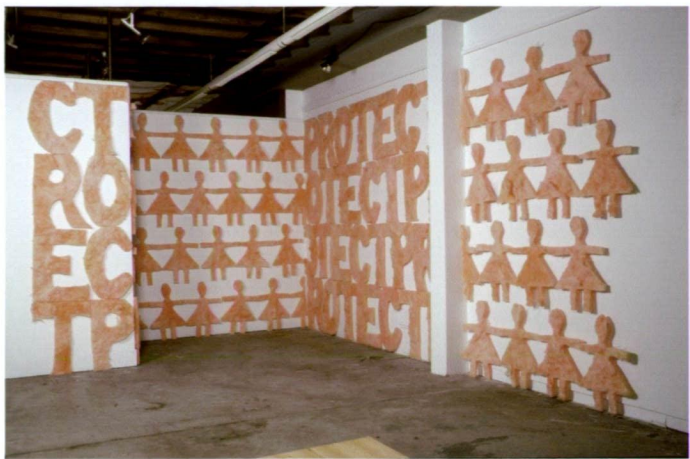


**Fig. 17 Fiona Lee Iron, 2002**  
Etching  
Image: Jan Dallas

At the beginning of this project I sought to reflect changes in the traditional gender roles within the domestic space. My practice moved away from prints and two dimensional works to various studio experiments with the materials and elements that make up the structure of the home, materials such as wall studs, pink (insulation) batts, footings, plasterboard and concrete.

My first work, titled *Safe as Houses* 2003, consisted of cut-out female figures, strung together like paper dolls and covering the corner walls of the gallery.

(Fig. 18) Dispersed within this work was large format lettering spelling out the word, PROTECTPROTECTPROTECT, playing on the material's ability to provide protection from the cold and to enclose the occupants of a house, but with an added meaning of the house as being a safe haven.



**Fig. 18 Fiona Lee** *Safe as Houses* 2003  
Pink batts.  
Image: the author

One of the important aspects to come out of this work was the relationship between the material and the audience, especially any open dialogue between viewers. Reactions varied, from a strong association to the feminine to fear of contracting lung disease and these readings of the work set up an ambiguity that had never occurred in my prints. However, while this preliminary work seemed engaging, experiments with the material ultimately did not lead to a firm direction for the project.

During the Christmas break of 2003, I worked with a group of artists on a work for the Henry Jones IXL building. The project included mining the derelict site for artifacts that could be used to make works in the new hotel development that were available for sale. At the site I found a fragment of wallpaper clinging precariously to a wall. It was a small artifact of feminine taste in a little attic bedroom above the old jam factory. (Fig. 19) At this point, I began to focus more on the idea that decoration and ornamentation in the home was disappearing. The jam factory employed a lot of women and the idea that this small fragment of floral paper was now representative of substantial changes in the social structure of the home which was to become a key concern.



**Fig. 19 Fiona Lee** *Pattern Repeat* 2003  
Lino print, digital image, ink and organza  
Image: Jan Dallas



This was an important breakthrough and, as a result of the decision to include pattern and decoration in the work, I began research in the field which involved talking to interior decorators, home store personnel, retailers and customers. Although the work that I produced at this time took the form of prints, it was while carrying out this phase of the research that I sought to expand the visual experience beyond the two-dimensional image. One poignant moment that reinforced my conviction to shift my practice occurred when I discovered that the prints that were available in the home stores and decorating shops were not so different from the prints that I was producing. I resolved to move away from this medium and explored different ways to adorn ordinary materials such as pink plasterboard with decorative pattern through the process of scratching and engraving; working directly into the surface of building materials. (Fig. 20) The research was indicating that an intimate connection with the physical environment of a space could provide the viewer with a heightened awareness of decoration - by creating decoration using construction (as opposed to decorative) materials would allow the viewer to experience a forgotten 'rawness' that is lacking in our universal homes. Simultaneously, I undertook an investigation through experimentation with interactive environments and installations to provide new ways to engage the viewer.



**Fig. 20 Fiona Lee *Untitled* 2003**  
Engraved pink plasterboard, enamel paint, plastic, Porters Interno Limewash.  
Image: Lucia Usmiani

### **Change from object to concept**

The first work I conceived in this investigation was inspired by my chance observation of an old floral couch located on a veranda. The pattern on the couch was fading after long exposure to the sun. The disappearance of the pattern seemed an appropriate metaphor to express the fading of feminine influence in the décor of the home, which coincides with men's increased



involvement in this arena. At the time this was happening in my own home, my husband remained at home while I went to work.

I sought permission to place a new floral couch, complete with swing-tag, in the courtyard of CAST, a contemporary art space where I worked, for one year. I had planned to document the floral patterning on the couch every day that I worked there, watching as it gradually faded and disappeared. The final work would show the couch (having spent a year outdoors) with 365 images sequentially displayed. (Blanks on the days I was not at work.) I was hoping that gallery visitors would wonder why it was there and/or use it. I also considered that a homeless person who frequented the area might sleep on it. Government regulations and an inability to find a new floral couch stymied the project so it was abandoned. From this exploration, however, I found myself taking a more conceptual approach and I began to think of new ways to explore works that would involve the viewer and enhance their interaction with the work.

### *It's the Vibe*

This new direction was trialled in a work that invoked gallery etiquette. *Acidophilus: Live Culture Colonised at the TMAG*, was an exhibition where I had to interact with a work from the collection of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. I chose the work of David Aspden, titled *Castle Hill Summer 1975*, which depicts small, bright, colourful swatches of paint, not unlike confetti, over seven metres of canvas. I digitally reproduced the image onto a two-metre piece of fabric and covered an existing TMAG gallery bench seat. (Fig. 16) On looking at Aspden's work for a period of time, the swatches of paint appear to shift and move in front of one's eyes, in other words, to vibrate. To achieve a similar visual sensation, the seat was positioned in front of the painting so that the viewer was able to sit for extended periods.



**Fig. 16 Fiona Lee** *It's the Vibe* 2005  
Digital print on Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery bench.  
Collection: Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery  
Image: Simon Cuthbert

Titled *It's the Vibe* (after the quintessential, home-based Australian movie *The Castle*), the work aims to create a dilemma for the viewer, particularly in such an important institution such as the TMAG where visitors are aware of and adhere to gallery protocols. While viewers saw that the works were related and assumed that they must not touch the seat or sit on it, the seat was customarily placed there for the visitor to use. Gallery staff were instructed to give no indication to the viewers as to whether or not they were permitted to sit on the seat. I wanted visitors to question their *politesse* within the gallery and set up a personal dilemma that forced them to question their actions. It was the reaction of the viewers to this work that made the work successful and gave further evidence that the relational aspect of the exploration was valuable for the direction of the project. This work also raised questions about the value attributed to decoration. When decoration exists on upholstered fabric in the home it is seen as 'lowly', but when the same motif appears in a painting it is treated with more respect. The relational strategies of this work were enhanced when the seat was purchased by the museum. The institution inadvertently reacquired its own item of furniture.

*It's the Vibe* provided a positive outcome for this investigation, particularly with regard to viewer involvement in gallery protocol, however my research was aligned to the domestic and so it was from my initial encounter with the Harvey Norman department store and their furniture display that subsequently led to the next work *Where have all the cabbages gone?* 2005-06. An inability to find floral couches, which are for me strong carriers of pattern choice, through this store and other sources, including Freedom and Fantastic Furniture, added to my observations about the diminution of pattern and decoration in the domestic interior.



Nancy Troy, in her essay 'Domesticity, Decoration and Consumer Culture', outlines the early formation of the commercial department store, its alignment to the decorated feminine domestic arena and the feminised area of consumer culture. But more importantly at this time, she argues, the fundamental reality of decoration was to be the 'satisfaction of the senses rather than the engagement of the mind', implied by Gleizes and Metzinger in their 1912 book *Du "cubisme"*.<sup>44</sup> This tenet was what underpinned the early modernist distrust and dismissal of ornament and this elitist disposition is still current today. It is my view that mass-consumer culture the 'less is more' philosophy still signifies intellect, while decoration, rather than being viewed as a vital signifier of identity, commonality and community, is still seen to be frivolous, functionless and inessential in a serious world.

I was beginning to notice that this distancing of the personal, a move away from the choice of decoration through current in mass consumption, seemed to be having a profound impact on the way we feel about our home space. To confirm my research I sought information from various home and decorating stores about consumer preference in interior décor. I examined the differences between major national home stores and popular, locally owned decorating stores. I was not so much interested in the competition for market share, but how their products and promotional information influenced consumer trends and, more importantly, how each of the businesses accommodated their customers' needs in terms of individual choice.

#### **The Decorama Project: *The White Couch*. Living Artist Week**

Decorama is a fabric-decorating store in suburban Moonah. It is seen as an icon in the community that services the many needs of home decorators. After several visits and interviews with management and staff, I was struck by the personal interaction they had with their customers and their individual ideas on the 'art' of home decorating.

As part of my research, I negotiated with the store to make a work for Living Artist Week titled *The White Couch*, 2005, where I wanted to explore a more emotive response by engaging the viewer in a subjective choice-making process. It would be a work that was installed in the store and required the direct involvement of the viewer/customer when choosing a pattern. (Fig. 21) The visitor was able to scroll over a grid of small images on a computer

<sup>44</sup> Troy, Nancy. J. 'Domesticity, Decoration and Consumer Culture: Selling Art and Design in Pre-World War I France.', in Reed, op.cit., p. 117.

screen and select a fabric that was then projected onto the white couch in the space. (Fig.22)



**Fig. 21 Fiona Lee** *The White Couch* 2005  
Computer screen showing interactive panel  
Image: the author

This work was an interesting gesture in terms of research, but I was disappointed in the reaction of the audience in this particular setting. It seemed more like a sales tool and I didn't enjoy works that 'required' the generosity of the viewer to participate. The audience response seemed forced and not very positive and I questioned the use of this strategy in this particular location which had a customer base that was not a regular arts-going audience. I used the time during the period of the installation to interview staff, customers and travelling sales representatives to gather more information about people's attitude towards decoration in the domestic environment.<sup>45</sup>



**Fig. 22 Fiona Lee** *The White Couch* 2005,  
Projected pattern fabrics, white couch  
Image: the author

From this project however, the research continued to develop the concept of spectator involvement as an antithesis of what was happening in the field of interior design with a loss of involvement by the owner/decorator. These informal but lively discussions led to preliminary talks with the proprietor

<sup>45</sup> Research data, including comments and observations about this project, is summarized in Appendix II

about a future exhibition at the ARI space, Inflight Gallery. The exhibition, which included moving the stock and staff of Decorama into the gallery for a two-week sale of fabrics, became central to this research, as the business's approach to marketing was aligned to a strong connection of individual choice with creative engagement in decorating. It would also provide an interesting counterpoint to *The White Couch* project.

After planning this new Decorama exhibition and as a result of the research acquired during *The White Couch* project, the focus of my work changed from an initial attempt to describe a cultural shift in the domestic interior in terms of taste, style, and gender to an exploration of human experience with a given work. Having to explain the project to the Inflight programming committee and funding bodies, where and what the project was, enabled me to solidify my relational art objectives. This new direction changed the investigation from the original idea of producing works with high aesthetic appeal to looking at the relationship that could be formed between the viewer, gallery and the work. (see the *Decorama at Inflight* collaboration p. 44)

#### *Where have all the cabbages gone?*

My concern in giving the viewer a more experiential encounter with the work, resulted in *Where have all the cabbages gone?*, 2005-06, a three-part installation that both invoked a loss of identity and sought to bring the viewer into an interactive engagement with the work. Having encountered the large national home-store Harvey Norman during this research, I began working on a small image of one of the founders, Gerry Harvey, that was appropriated from the store's catalogue.

I was drawn to this particular image because of the way he personalized the relentless promotional advertising campaigns conducted through television and the print media. This public show of intimacy by Gerry Harvey, in order to deconstruct consumer perception of large multinational companies was, in fact, the antithesis of what his company provides in both service and commodity. The portrait of him in a suit and strategically turned to inspire power and to imbue him with authority was reinforced by his signature.

In order to facilitate a reading of the loss of identity, I photocopied this image repeatedly in a parody of the monotonous repetition of Harvey Norman's advertising strategy. The image gradually started to disintegrate and disappear into an anonymous series of dots and marks. This strategy gave

emphasis to the project's concern about identity being lost in repetition and sameness.

In using the image repetitively, for one part of this work, I made a pile of free facsimile 'sales' catalogues, that the viewer could take from the gallery. The installation also included two passive elements - a set of freely hanging sheets of wallpaper and a large cut-out rose.

The twelve-page catalogue offered the viewer no typical product promotion, but instead displayed a series of the black and white portraits of Gerry Harvey. The title SAME was printed over the front of the catalogue to look like "SALE" with the 'SA' in a different opacity to 'ME' while the image of Harvey was so small and repetitive, that it was unidentifiable. (Fig. 23)

The concept of offering a 'free giveaway' is often used as ploy in consumer marketing, but it is a strategy not normally associated with exhibition viewing. The catalogues became desirable because the viewer sees that others in the room have a copy and this gave 'permission' for them to take one.<sup>46</sup> With a defined limit of 1000 copies noted in the title, some viewers may have realized that if everyone takes a catalogue, this act will ultimately change the outcome of the work, while other viewers may relish the idea that they have got something for nothing (a commercial marketing strategy but unusual in a gallery situation).



**Fig. 23** Fiona Lee *Where have all the cabbages gone?* 2006 (detail)  
Facsimile catalogue, 1000 copies  
Image: the author

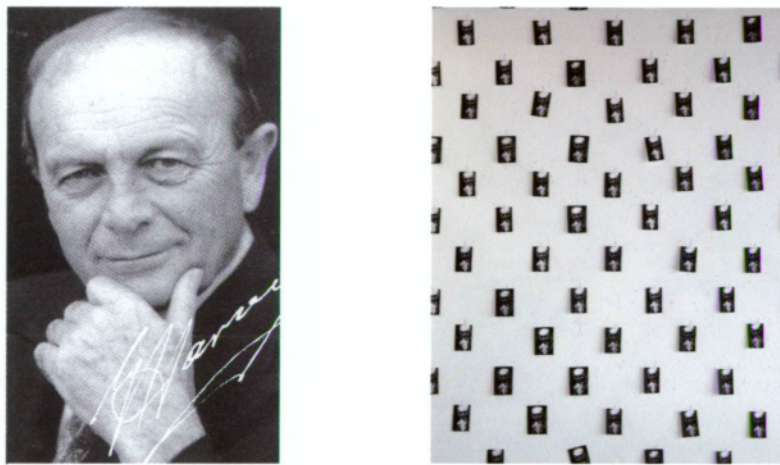
The disappearing face of the owner of the business empire, a face quite familiar to many Australians and who is considered a genuinely 'nice guy', may be disturbing for some, when his only crime is to perpetuate mediocrity. But after being drawn into taking a catalogue, the viewer is somehow disseminating this 'crime'. It is the tension or relationship that develops

<sup>46</sup> This was a very strong observation in the *Decorama at Inflight* exhibition where a viewer would look around for permission (from others touching the work) before committing an act of transgression and breaking gallery etiquette.



between the viewer and work, and between the viewers as a collective, that is important in this work.

My research had indicated that the use of wallpaper was not as popular as it had been in the past and, coupled with some of my experimental work with materials that are not intended to be seen as or used in decoration, I chose lining wallpaper to complete the second stage of the work.<sup>47</sup> Using these types of materials seemed to suggest concealed identity, which is central to this research. Basing the wallpaper design on the catalogue imagery and on Gombrich's suggestion that, in using multiple prints, '...the repeated elements, as we have seen [referencing Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe* 1962], lose something of their identity as they merge in the overall form', I set about making a wallpaper out of the disappearing face of Gerry Harvey. (Fig. 24)



**Fig. 24** Gerry Harvey image taken from a sales catalogue and trial layout for the wallpaper  
Images: the artist

The third part of the work located on another wall, was a cut-out of an image of a large rose taken from a floral furnishing fabric. (Fig. 25) This work highlighted the fact, as my research indicated, that this type of motif is not readily available in decorating styles at Harvey Norman stores. The title of this installation, taken from the Peter, Paul and Mary song, *Where have all the flowers gone?*, symbolically asks Gerry Harvey the question, what have you done with the imagery that provided the homely warmth with which my grandmother's aesthetic was imbued?

<sup>47</sup> Lining wallpaper is used to sure up unstable walls and/ or as a surface primer for painting.



**Fig. 25** White rose trial.  
Image: the author

Postmodern architect, and one of the most influential critics of modernism, Robert Venturi also looked at the connections of family and memory by designing furniture and home wares that displayed familiar motifs from childhood. The most memorable example he discussed was a couch designed and covered in a cabbage rose pattern for Knoll International, ironically, a firm with strong associations to modernist designs. (Fig. 26)



**Fig. 26 Robert Venturi** *Grandmother Sofa* 1984 for Knoll International  
Image: <http://www.raumausstattung.de/7999/7079.html>

In contrast to Venturi's obvious celebration of his grandmother's aesthetic, I have chosen, in *Where have all the cabbages gone?*, to dissolve the figure/ground contrast to suggest the fading pattern of a large cabbage rose, (a traditional English motif popular in domestic fabric decoration) which disappears as it is consumed by the white wall of the gallery.

I covered the cut-out rose in curtain lining that, on its reverse side, had a soft nap that resembled flocked wallpapers of the past. Using the lining as well as

using the reverse side, again brought an aesthetic element to what was normally a hidden utilitarian material - alluding to our concealed pattern history. The flatness or graphic quality of the image highlighted a lack of emotion in the flower; as though it had been dumbed down and stylised and drained of content.

### *Toneontone*

After creating the previous work, I looked at other ways of creating a sense of involvement for the viewer that did not require a decision-making process or pressure to be an active participant. I began to consider that, by totally immersing the spectators in the work, they would have no choice but to be engaged in it. I went back to the experience of the *Safe as Houses* work and revisited the pink batts. This time I researched the different types of pink batts and found the sound proofing material the most exciting. This particular product was denser, more compacted and less fluffy than the ones I had previously used, which made it easier to cut and it also had the advantage of fibres that were less prone to being inhaled.

This positive characteristic further fuelled the idea of an all-enclosing installation where the walls were completely covered in ornament made of a substance that would normally be hidden in a wall cavity. If it worked, the acoustic properties would be brought into play and viewers would be able to hear themselves and reflect on their being in that space.

According to the research conducted as part of *The White Couch* project, the most popular fabric chosen by the viewer/participants, was the *Arianne* Design. It was the most highly graphic motif and I chose it for the pattern repeat. (Fig.27) The individual scroll motif, is used repetitively, dissolving into an overall pattern and thus making it difficult to isolate the individual shape.

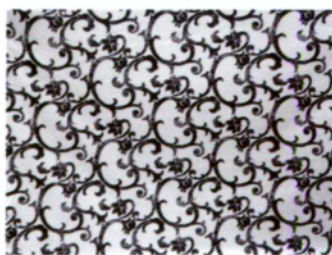


Fig. 27 *Arianne* Warwick Fabric  
From the Rococo collection  
Images: the author



Aluminium template



The figure/ground relationship in the work is seen to dissolve, making the figure less pronounced, analogous to the idea of loss of individuality. This, coupled with repetition, blurs the distinctiveness of the motif.

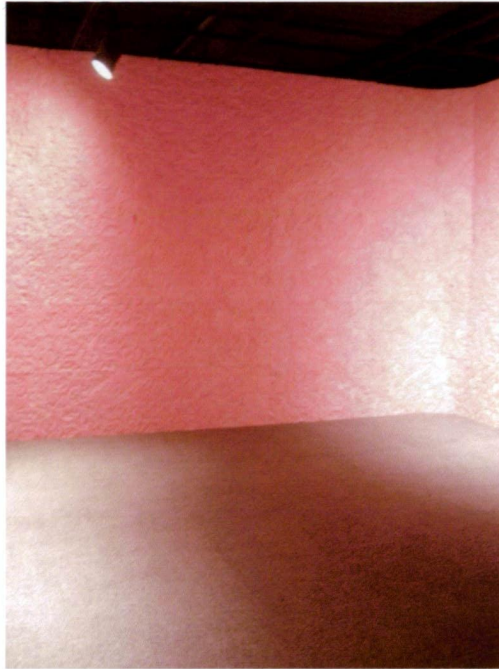


**Fig. 28** Fiona Lee *Toneontone* 2006 (detail)  
Image: the author

The pink batts were manufactured by a process that left a regimented texture on the surface and, even though the batts were a mass-produced product, each batt nonetheless had its own qualities. (Fig. 28) Some parts, almost white in areas, were soft and spongy, while it was hard and crusty in the areas where there was a lot of dye. This effectively made the process of cutting hard to regulate, but in terms of individuality it did give each motif its own characteristics. When the surface was cut away, it exposed a fluffy, soft surface that, while it seemed feminine, also exuded an awkward quality that warped that characteristic. To me this work highlights the craft aspect of home decorating in contrast to the ready-made interiors *designed* by outsiders.

As part of my exploration into the reversal of the male/female role in the home, in one section, I disrupted the pattern, by reversing the motif. It was not nearly as poetic as the 'pretty' floral positive, however I combined the section within the work to disrupt the pattern and to engage the viewer who may try to decode the disturbance in the pattern.

This particular type of pink batt provided numerous readings and, being able to trial *Toneontone* 2006 in the exhibition *Deluxe: decorous crossovers between art and design*, I was able to gauge visitor responses.



**Fig. 29 Fiona Lee *Toneontone* 2006**  
Image: the author

The key areas of the research were easily identified by the audience; these being the experience of *loss* of identity, decoration, feeling and sound. Even though the space was vacuous, it created a solitary, enclosed experience for the viewers where they were very aware of their presence within the space. The visceral qualities of the material (and its original soundproofing qualities) added to the idea of an internal space drawing associations to the maternal. One viewer referred to the experience as being *anaesthetic*, alluding to the dulling muffled feeling on entering the room. Another referred to it as being like a graphic equalizer where the highs and lows are equalled out visually as well as aurally. This neutralising effect was emphasised on two of walls by fading out the pattern. It was as though the decoration and sound was absorbed into the material, similar to the work of Joseph Beuys', *Plight* 1985, where the large roles of grey felt absorbed sound, temperature and feeling.

The overall effect of being immersed in a pink, fluffy room has the immediate sensation of being somewhat suffocating, and the other dimension however, is that the soundlessness caused by being surrounded by the pink batts making the atmosphere thick with suggestion. More important, however, is the fact that while contemplating it, the overpowering silence



makes the individual become more aware of his or her own being within the work. In this fast-paced society there is rarely an opportunity to hear your own heart beat or express one's individuality. Dulling the sound element produced a heightened sense of the viewer's own existence in the space.



**Fig. 30 Fiona Lee** *Toneontone* 2006  
Image: the author

### ***FREE sit***

The couch, an important element in domestic life, has held a significant place within my overall project. Symbolically, it represents togetherness, conviviality and comfort and it often sits near the spiritual centre of a home - the hearth. It also has a large surface on which to relay decorative information and it is what I vividly remember when I think of childhood memories such as Christmas, grandmother or lying on it when I was sick - tracing the flowers with my fingers.

Through my research, I have identified that the couch is now a disposable object. Instead of wading through swatches of fabrics in order to recover a favourite old sofa, the high cost of upholstering, cheap replacements (with limited choice of design - to keep costs down), and aggressive promotion by 'mega stores' has meant that the consumer has little choice but to succumb to a 'beige' expression of individuality.

*FREE sit*, 2006, deals with this banality by attempting to erase ornament. It tempts the viewer to engage with the work and at the same time it distances

*FREE sit*, 2006, deals with this banality by attempting to erase ornament. It tempts the viewer to engage with the work and at the same time it distances them by creating an awkward situation. The title offers the viewer permission to sit down and try the couch and chairs, much as they would do in a department store. This concept brings into question the idea of the exhibition label as being a source of information (like the catalogue) and subverts it by offering the viewer a chance to respond to a direction. This strategy, similar to consumer advertising where customers are lured into purchasing items by the offer of free products or services, creates a situation for the viewer where he/she must decide whether to play out the action requested or to remain a passive spectator.



**Fig. 31** Working drawings for *FREE sit* using a correction pen.  
Image: the author

In the work itself, the frantic whiteout drawing attempts to remove difference; it takes away the point of reference that sets it aside from others, (the floral pattern) taking with it these traces of history and memory and leaving only small seepages of information. (Fig. 31) This action aims to underscore the idea of erasure, a 'freeing up' of that which makes us distinct.

The three pieces are dimly lit and set out as if in a store display, imitating a 'home sitting room'. (Fig. 32) A light underneath makes the pieces hover above the ground giving the impression that the sofa and chairs are floating and inaccessible. A Venetian *blind*, which, by name suggests that we can't see, is set behind the couch and is back-lit. The noise created as the viewer steps from the carpeted floor onto the white footprint flooring makes the idea of sitting undesirable, as does the stiff painted fabric when it is touched. This distancing of the work from the viewer could be seen as a metaphor for a form of detachment experienced by home decorators, a detachment also brought about by homogenous consumption.



**Fig. 32.** Harvey Norman showroom showing a simple layout and white flooring underneath.  
Image: the author

### *Decorama At Inflight*

This solo exhibition was conceived as a result of *The White Couch* project but was not mounted until late in the research. It involved relocating the stock and staff of the Decorama fabric store in the gallery space for a (genuine) two-week sale of fabrics. The remnant fabric bolts date back to the seventies when the business first opened. In the last two weeks of the exhibition, the main gallery had a projection of video footage showing the bumping in of the exhibition and the opening night. A second smaller projection space displayed a series of documentation images of customer/audience members who agreed to be identified beside their fabric choice. (see *Me* p.49)



**Fig. 33** Decorama 'sale' signage and intervention into the neighbouring café.  
Image: the author

The project involved extensive collaboration with the staff and management of *Decorama*, an institution with a strong involvement in decorating over the last 35 years. For the older non-arts community and the regular arts audience, the work provided a connection to the past; a relinking to their personal pattern history. It also provided the possibility of an encounter with art that



sat outside their expectations and the audience engaged in the project at whatever level they wished. The non-arts audience was predominantly drawn from the busy café and bar next to the gallery. These businesses, Kaos Café and Soak, collaborated with the Decorama staff to install decorative elements within the businesses to enhance the exhibition and draw customers to the fabric sale. (Fig 33)

Decorama was a perfect collaborative partner because the owner, Deb Gajda, (and her staff) seemed passionate about the loss of individuality brought on by consumer trends and bland decorating styles. The idea of this business being locally owned, as opposed to a national chain store such as Freedom or Harvey Norman, meant that the staff were more interested in the customer as individuals and could offer them a wider range of choices.<sup>48</sup>

For the exhibition itself, my initial interest lay in engaging the two types of visitors to the gallery. Firstly, there were those who were there for a cultural encounter and, secondly, those who came to the gallery for a shopping experience. I was interested in seeing if the two types of visitors could be corrupted from their initial intention; a situation where the gallery viewer goes home with a piece of fabric (art) and the shopper anxious about touching or taking home a piece of the art.

A facsimile catalogue was produced that echoed the idea of a 'sales' tool, using the cheap stock and hints of design that reference a typical promotional document. The publication also included essays by the storeowner, two catalogue essays and an artist's statement.

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<sup>48</sup> Staff at the larger national stores researched, seemed to have limited in knowledge about decorating, pattern and fabrics, and were often seconded from other areas of the store.



**Fig. 34** Fiona Lee *Decorama* at Inflight 2006  
Opening night.  
Image: the author

On opening night, at first, the audience was reluctant to engage with the fabrics, but, after the first purchase, participants soon forgot where they were and grabbed fabrics in a frenzied fashion, carrying them around and talking about their choices while enjoying the ‘70s food and drinks. (Fig. 34)

Participants purchased the fabrics on leaving the exhibition space. The restaurant next door was filled with rolls of fabric leaning up against the wall as satisfied customers ate their dinner after the opening. Just before closing, two women came in off the street to ascertain what was occurring and purchased several hundred dollars worth of fabric.



**Fig. 35** Fiona Lee *Decorama* at Inflight 2006  
First customers  
Image: the author

In an act of the everyday, the predominantly feminine pastime of shopping debased the strict gallery ‘no touch’ rules of high culture – and brought into question the roles of the viewer while being in that space. This was

In an act of the everyday, the predominantly feminine pastime of shopping debased the strict gallery 'no touch' rules of high culture – and brought into question the roles of the viewer while being in that space. This was particularly apt in the last two weeks of the project, where the viewer could see the fabrics in the darkened room but were not allowed to touch because they were not for sale. Adding to this was an idea of 'missing out on the sale' with the documentation of the previous activity in the gallery space accentuated this missed opportunity. The impact of this work could be best evaluated by a comment from one member of the art audience who said that he had paid five dollars for a bolt of fabric simply to be part of the 'experience'.



**Fig. 36** A 'Burenian' moment 2006  
Image: Eve Beecroft

At the end of the exhibition, there was a 'Burenian' moment after a customer sent me photographs and the story of her experience with the exhibition. She was surprised by the similarity between her daughter's choice of fabric, (purchased at a separate time), and her own and described the fabrics as looking like awnings. (Fig. 36)<sup>49</sup>

### *Me*

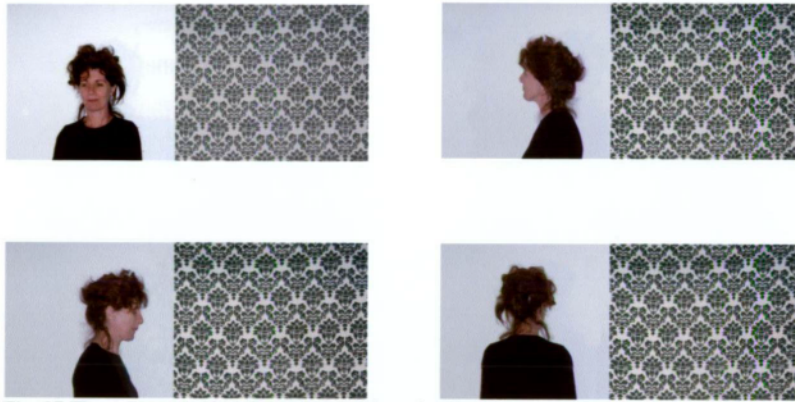
The small projection work titled *Me* 2006, is the leftover from the *Decorama at Inflight* exhibition and as a last work, it is the most literal in terms of identity and pattern. The viewer is lured into a comfortable domestic setting

<sup>49</sup> See The 'Burenian' moment. Appendix II.



to view the images that are projected rapidly, reflecting the transitory memories of the participants.

In design history, the seventies and eighties was a period in time when ornament was an essential expression of identity. From bold fabric designs in hot colours, to floral sprig patterns for the ‘cottage look’, these fabrics, now out of print, provided a nostalgic interlude for the viewers, with many, both male and female, reminded of their mothers and home. The younger audience were much more excited by the fact that these were new patterns and they looked at them as stylish and ‘cool’. In this work, *Me*, the patterns the customers chose were specifically those that they thought best identified their personalities. (Fig 37)



**Fig. 37 Fiona Lee *Me* 2006 Digital projection (detail)**  
Images: the artist

The comments from the audience (both art audience and consumers) were deeply imbedded in a personal history of pattern. Nostalgia was a common emotion experienced by the audience during the exhibition and many had fleeting memories about decorating styles, shopping experiences and the Decorama store itself. Adding to the nostalgia, the store, in its early incarnation, coincidentally opened for business in the seventies across the road from Inflight Gallery, and, as one of the employees commented when installing the exhibition display, these fabrics were coming home.<sup>50</sup>

### Summary

This project involved extensive research within the field, interviewing store employees, customers and those working in the decorating field. (Appendix II) Trialing methods and strategies as I continued, the project changed from being object centred - relying solely on the object's relationship with the

<sup>50</sup> See Appendix II *Decorama at Inflight*

### PART III: HOW THE WORK WAS PURSUED

viewer as a spectator - to not only demanding *viewer involvement* with the object and its relationship to the gallery space, but also asking the viewer to examine their very being within the spaces created. Whether it was by the tension caused through the decision making process in taking the catalogue, the awareness of their presence within the *Toneontone* environment, or the act of engaging with the instructions in *FREE sit*, these works looked at new ways of engaging with art and of reactivating an individual's capacity to make their own decisions about the spaces they inhabit.



## CONCLUSION

The research identified that many contemporary homes are becoming spaces for exhibiting 'successful' lifestyles; spaces of order, conformity and anonymity, which tend to dominate domestic environments where the selection of furnishings does not express the homemaker's individuality. The investigation sought to exploit and challenge the traditional idea of the 'white cube' gallery space by offering it up as a counterpoint to the contemporaneous universal home. Though the use of decoration, readily available cultural products and strategies that directly involved the viewer in the work, the project aimed to enable the audience to consider their individual connectedness to their home environment.

This project began with the creation of aesthetically crafted works displayed in the traditional way as objects on the wall, but as this engaged the viewer in a passive mode only, it was abandoned. The project sought to move towards a more interactive-based art which reactivated the viewers' capacity to engage with a range of aesthetic choices related to the decoration of domestic space. I drew on the theories on relational art and postproduction of Nicolas Bourriaud as a vehicle for conceptualising this stage of the project. Through the creation of 'circumstances' within the gallery environment, the project tracked current social debates on issues such as gender, identity and consumer culture within the domestic environment in an attempt to comment on the loss of ornamentation from our domestic culture and subsequent diminution of identity.

### Research methodologies and findings

The works were informed by an engagement with local consumers and commercial enterprises which, in turn, transformed the visual component of this project into one that moved away from the objectification of the work and towards the *relationship* between the viewer, the space and the work.

The trialing of the works in different locations revealed that the works received a much better response in a gallery space as opposed to a commercial space. The general response of the audience in the gallery setting, for both an art audience and a 'consumer audience' was that of engagement and intrigue. The gallery setting provided a platform that enabled a greater range of ways to engage with the works. In a commercial space, however, the work was often greeted with confusion and dismissal,

mistaken for a commercial activity, and the consumer-based audience required encouragement to participate in the projects.

### **Significance in the field**

The significance of this project to the field is to highlight, by way of a visual exploration, the strong links between identity and ornamentation that have eroded over time in the domestic arena. While there are many theories on consumer culture linked to ornament, there are very few that deal specifically with identity and our feelings about the spaces we occupy.

The modernist dismissal of ornament as trivial and non-functional, introduced in the early twentieth century, has continued to inform contemporaneous interior design, but this research seeks to validate a return to ornament in interiors as a *transmitter of identity* in an increasingly globalised world.

One of the main objectives of this project was to look at a perceived loss of identity brought about through individuals distancing themselves from their decorative histories and memories. The impact of the mass consumption of consumer items serviced by the world of advertising and promotion delivers a 'sameness' that, in my view, has no distinctive relationship to us as individuals. The project's observation of domestic ornamental loss (in correlation to the loss of identity) is an aspect of increasing global sameness, which makes Bourriaud's comments particularly pertinent to the investigation. In using available cultural materials, the project has sought new ways of giving expression to this phenomenon.

As a result of this investigation I have further research and works planned that investigate an increased level of personal attachment to interior decoration. Participants from the *Decorama at Inflight* exhibition have offered photographs and information about the end product they created from the fabrics acquired through the exhibition. In addition, I will be installing *Toneontone* inside the wall cavities of a home renovation, to create an installation where the work may never be seen again; questioning both the traditional role of the commercial art market and the idea of art for investment and public display.

By creating works in this exhibition that activate a subjective relationship between the work, the viewer and the space, the project opens up new readings for ornamentation and its place in the domestic environment.



Fig. 38 Installation images  
Image: the author

**APPENDIX 1**

**List of works**

1. *Where have all the cabbages gone?*, 2005-06  
MDF, curtain lining, wallpaper lining paper, photocopies  
1000 facsimile catalogues, catalogue stand  
Dimensions variable
2. *Toneontone*, 2006  
Pink sound insulation batts  
12.5 x 2.9m
3. *FREE sit*, 2006  
Lounge suite, Venetian blind, MDF, LED lights  
Dimensions Variable
4. *Me*, 2006  
Digital projection, couch, rug, lamp  
Dimensions variable

## APPENDIX II

### Research data

The following is a list of anecdotal comments, opinions and observations made during the research of this project. These annotations have been gathered over a period of three and a half years as a result of informal interviews and discussions with interior decorators, home store personnel, retailers and customers and relay information about the changing state of ornamented design in contemporary home interiors. They are included because it is from them that I drew the material for the works of art in this submission. It is by no means a formal study into the sociological aspects of changes to society and culture.

### **Decorama (large owner operated decorating fabric store)**

#### **Staff members interviewed noted:**

- That women were still making the major purchases, however they now tended to buy fabrics that were neutral in colour - not the 'flowery over the top' coloured prints that were sold previously.
- Customers tended to prefer fabrics that were less ornamented. The 'tone on tone' patterns were popular because they contained pattern that was less prominent.
- Decorative cushions and throw rugs in bold patterns were now used to add small amounts colour.
- Changing family units have contributed to shifting buying patterns and styles. Household members generally work outside the home so – people look for a quick, cheap solution to decorating. The big home stores provide that service.
- That because parents are working longer hours and, coupled with extra curricular activities and after school care, families are not spending as much time at home. In practical terms the clean slick interior can be maintained because no one is at home to disrupt the modernist 'look'.
- With the increasing divorce rates, second families setting up home are now more common. Two partners, coming from different relationships, have to undergo change which disrupts the often traditional patriarchal model experienced in the previous relationship. Rather than the woman taking on the role of homemaker, the new partners seek to accommodate each other's lifestyles (and families) by going out of their way to share the responsibilities of running and decorating the new home.
- Family and household structures are changing and they now include singles, childless and same sex couples, combined families from previous relationships as well as the traditional family unit. These different forms of cohabitation have meant that there are changes to the way houses are designed with inner city flats and apartments increasingly being the choice of the smaller cohabitating household unit, while larger houses on 'estates' or in the suburbs are the preferred choice for the larger family.
- Disposable incomes and affordable home loans allow for greater flexibility in the housing market and homes are bought and sold more often, as family needs change. A patterned wall, carpet or window treatment can be a deterrent to a future sale as buyers are less likely to appreciate someone else's decorating style.
- The influx of aspirational home-styling magazines and television home decorating shows, that prescribe 'ideal' interior decoration trends, have been one of the biggest influences on the consumption of home goods. Fashion styles and trends promoted through these forms are often replicated by super home-stores and promoted by



their aggressive marketing strategies - offering the 'look' for a bargain price. Sometimes these consumer items are delivered to the consumers' door and payment is not due on the items for up to two years.

- Not only is pattern excluded as a choice on soft furnishings and wallpapers, but also the styles of home interiors that are promoted do not allow for personalization. The 'look' is important and the sellers of instant interiors have artworks and knick-knack s that complete that objective. However, one of the most important aspects in personalizing the home is having the detritus of life evident in the décor - having ones things around gives a sense of security and ownership. A knick-knack bought to go with the interior you have just purchased at a super store, is not going to be the same as the one that you picked up on the beach at Christmas, or when you were on holiday in Italy.
- Today, possibly for economic reasons, the desire for wallpaper has lessened.
- Heavily ornamented wallpapers tended to be overbearing in an interior and the style often go out of fashion quickly.
- Houses are bought and sold more often and a patterned wall can be a deterrent to the future sale of a home, as buyers become aware of the need to add the cost of redecorating onto the purchase price of a home.
- The increasing array of different types of paint available on today's market provides a variety of textured and decorative effects for walls that can be achieved without relying on laborious wallpapering techniques.
- Wallpaper was an effective means of 'suring up' walls that were defective, with the pattern providing a suitable disguise for the imperfections. Now, instead of using wallpaper, new fixatives, wall treatments and plasterboard provide remedies to solve these problems.
- Blinds, traditionally used in conjunction with curtains, have increased in popularity and style. The adaptability of the blind form has made it an essential component in the sleek design style of today's interior and is now used more often as a single window treatment rather than in conjunction with curtains. Curtains, which have previously been a traditional source of pattern and decoration in the home, are now considered old fashioned and a 'dust trap'. They also clutter the pared-back 'look' of the contemporary style interior.

This was a large store with a considerable amount of stock (fabrics and decorating merchandise). Many of the staff had a good understanding of decorating and issues to do with home lifestyles. All of the staff members with whom I spoke were passionate about home decorating, often adding subjective comments and opinions.

#### **Freedom Furniture (national interior decorating store)**

##### **Staff noted that:**

- Decoration was something that changed with fashion that there would be some pattern returning soon.
- Decorative prints in bold fabrics were usually on soft furnishings that can be changed i.e. cushions - women were more likely to have the say on these smaller items.
- Both men and women choose the larger objects i.e. sofas, and they are mainly plain in style and colour.
- Interiors are now more neutral than gender specific.

- If the consumer chose a pattern - it was more than likely to be a textured pattern - a neutral, non-statement.
- Any form of contrasting decoration that would used to identify taste would be in the form of a throw rug, scatter cushion, artwork or floor rug. The economics of decorating played an important role in determining pattern choice – if customers were going to spend a lot of money on a large item like a couch – then it should be something that would last and not tire of.
- Where men were concerned - 'the days of roses on couches were definitely over' - this was because men spend more time at home now and share the responsibility of child rearing and housework.
- We are living in a throwaway society; to recover an existing couch is expensive.

Freedom stores have a nationwide presence. Unlike Harvey Norman, the pitch to their clientele revolves more around individual taste. However the status of being a 'national store' indicates that the merchandise they sell is the same in every store throughout Australia.

Freedom provides examples of couches for order in the last few pages of their catalogue, which are all marginally different and are displayed in basic white. The store however, only provides one or two unpatterned colourways for each style of couch, which limits customer choice.

**Featherston Interiors (small owner operator interior designer business)**  
**The proprietor noted that:**

- In recent years there are more men coming into the shop to buy items for the home, whereas ten years ago, "if a man walked into my shop to look at a couch, I would have considered him to be gay or from the opposition". Now, he said, it was common to see men buying furniture for the home, however it was predominantly couples that made joint decisions.
- There will be a resurgence of pattern, but it would be in small doses like the soft furnishings.
- The home is decorated more like an office with clean surfaces and more emphasis on design rather than decorative detail.
- Women were savvier than men when buying for the home.
- Unisex fashion is another aspect of de-gendering, with clothes providing a neutral gender, and similarly – interior decoration.

**Comments from hardware and building retailers about the colour pink used for products in the building trade:**

- Fletcher Insulation: The colour pink, in insulation batts, is so uniquely entrenched in the building trade that builders preferred it to other colours such as yellow and white.
- Cowley Interiors: Plasterboard used during the research is coloured pink to identify it as a fire retardant product.
- Tas Paints: pink primer for internal walls was traditionally made from lead and coloured pink for identification. It is now no longer available (because of the dangers of lead), however painters and decorators still prefer pink for undercoats, so modern primers are tinted pink to retain that 'authenticity'.

**Harvey Norman (national store with a home decorating department)**  
**Staff noted that:**

- The consumer is now in the market for furniture ready to go.
- Customers want what they can see and, although they can have their own choice of fabric on chairs and couches, (ones made in Australia

- only) they prefer to take what is readily available because it was quick and cheaper than having a couch or chairs custom made.
- Harvey Norman have such a large range that generally there was something to suit everyone.
- For unknown reasons couches and chairs were getting larger.

Staff at the Harvey Norman store were not interested in discussing styles or decorating trends. They also didn't display a sound general knowledge of lifestyles or home decoration in general. They were however, interested in promoting the products and services that were determined by store policy and items that were – ready to go. There weren't many staff on hand and the several times I went I often had to wait for some time to be served. When I said that I was doing research, they were less forthcoming.

#### **Fantastic Furniture (national budget furniture store)**

This store was only really selling the sofas and chairs that were in stock. Highly decorated items of furniture were not readily available in this store because most people wanted plain fabrics on their sofas. They could get something made up if a customer wanted but only in the fabrics that they had available. The odd thing about this retail outlet is that it is more like a warehouse and had couches stacked on top of one another –almost to the roof. It smelt of rubber and synthetic. The staff didn't have a comprehensive knowledge of decorating styles or consumer trends.

#### **Spotlight (national fabric and decorating store)**

This store is a franchise of a national chain and stocks decorating fabrics, decorator items and merchandise as well as dress fabrics. There were no staff readily available for comment, except behind the sales counter. It was difficult to ask questions because of the queue behind me.

#### ***The White Couch Project August 2005***

Earlier in the investigation Decorama staff had provided valuable material for this research. Their enthusiastic response opened the way for the next phase of the research which I undertook as a solo exhibition, sited within the store at suburban Moonah. *The White Couch* exhibition involved the projection of individual fabric designs onto a white couch. By choosing a fabric, the customers/audience actively participated in the work. I stayed with the projection to assist customers to interact with the work. This was an extremely valuable experience and defined some of the boundaries of this project. In all I spent nine days at the decorating store and interviewed customers and video taped staff and travelling sales representatives for this research. These are some of the comments and observations about *The White Couch* work and domestic ornamentation in general.

#### ***The White Couch***

##### **Reactions and observations noted about the work:**

- The distorting effects and the larger than life projected image was interesting and did they make fabrics with large flowers and patterns?
- It would be better if the imagery were more accurately depicted.
- 'Are there were more geometric styles or stripes because I hate flowers and frilly patterns?
- It would be good to have the option of changing the fabric every day and that projection could be the way to do that.
- 'Living with patterns like these would make me feel ill - it is just a projector making that pattern, so it's only temporary'.

- It was more fun because the customers/audience felt they didn't have to commit to a fabric. They could play with possibilities and express their choices without consequence.
- Many viewers noted that they liked the idea of being able to try before they made a purchase and said that they would be more confident in choosing an ornate fabric if they could see it on the couch first.
- The interaction and the ephemeral nature of the projection provided a heightened experience with some taking individual ownership of their choice.
- Nearly everyone commented that it would make a good marketing tool, with some mentioning it to the staff.
- Many people were not interested in patterned fabrics, although one man, who didn't like pattern or want to engage with the work, suggested he could be converted (to pattern and participating in the work) if a Geelong Football Club emblem could be printed onto a fabric. This indicated that ornamentation was acceptable as long as it was relevant to the individual.

This exhibition, displayed during Living Artists Week, was intended to engage an audience that was still seeking an active input into the decoration of their homes. The interesting aspect was that, apart from the art audience, the work in this setting was viewed as being closer to a commercial experience than to an artwork.

**Decorama staff and fabrics sales representative - comments and observations noted were that:**

- Often the first fabric to take a customers eye is the one that best suits their personalities. It is the basis of their final choice which is often a muted form of that original choice.
- A sales representative of a well-known fabric label, suggested that we are living in a 'safe mode' where consumers are not confident in committing to anything other than plain unadorned fabrics and interiors.
- The majority of consumers loved pattern and ornament, but they would more often than not choose a plainer alternative because they feared reprisal. They also did not want to be identified by that choice.
- The young homemakers are interested in ornamental designs but don't have time to look for complicated designs that may or may not match the other components in the interior.
- Trends are driven mainly by advertising campaigns and do not necessarily reflect individual choice.
- Architecture played an important part in determining the degree to which ornamentation was employed in interiors. An influx of modernist-style units, many with large windows and views to be exploited, were not being decorated in ornamental designs or with heavy use of pattern because consumers felt that they would compete with the view. The units or apartments often had smaller living areas and customers felt that ornamental fabrics were too overpowering.
- The simple modern designs lent themselves to plainer fabrics.
- The compromise for pattern is to have small swatches of pattern and colour in the form of prints, cushions and rugs, which were items that were inexpensive to change.
- Wallpapers were not promoted widely in magazines and advertising campaigns. Most of the interiors depicted were plain with muted colours.



- People that understood and had used wallpapers previously were more likely to be the main buyers.
- When choosing wallpaper the selection must be a considered one, particularly if it is to be hung over a large area. It then becomes a clear indication of individual taste.
- Fashion trends were forcing individuals not to make choices outside what was being promoted by fashion, and homemaker stores.
- The floral or highly ornamented carpets are now only sold as runners for hallways instead of a whole room.
- Young couples with children who are time-poor and hold two jobs were cited as reasons for simple interiors.
- Many home stores have 'ready-to-go' packages with lounge suites, accompanying furniture and accessories such as blinds, lamps, artwork and rugs, making choice easier.
- A more considered choice has to be made when a customer commits to ornate pattern. It is easier to choose a plain fabric, a white plate or a neutral carpet - there is less of a decision to be made.
- Different areas in the house are given different ratings as far as ornamentation. The bedroom is one area that more ornamented decoration would likely to be accepted. It is a private retreat where experimentation and trial is acceptable, and an area where 'others' do not have to make assumptions about an individual's taste. It is one area of the house that is not open for public scrutiny.

#### ***Decorama at Inflight September 2006***

##### **Comments and observations during the first two weeks of sales:**

- During the installation 'Ken' who has worked for Decorama since the seventies, enjoyed reminiscing about the fabrics, indicating the ones that were 'popular sellers'. He said he enjoyed seeing these 'old friends' again. He also noted that the original Decorama store opened in the 'seventies over the road from Inflight and that these fabrics, in a sense, were coming home.
- Another staff member said that preparing for the exhibition had invigorated her colleagues and cast new aspirations for the company.
- The staff were quite surprised that the old retro fabrics were so popular.
- Comments from members of the opening night audience were directly in line with the objectives of the project, which were; "this is what we had at the shack when I was a kid", and "This is what my mother would have chosen - it is so her", "I remember this stuff so well, I can't believe we went for these colours - but they are great aren't they?"
- After purchasing a roll for \$5.00 one customer/audience member said: "It's the cheapest piece of artwork I have ever bought - even if I walk out onto the street now and give it away - I have participated".
- A woman who came in off the street and was not a regular member of an art audience said, when told this was an exhibition said, "it's not like a normal exhibition - it's more about the experience of shopping - but in a gallery".
- Two women came in on opening night - quite late into the evening - they had enquired to the café staff next door about what was happening in there (the gallery). They were told it was a fabric sale and promptly came in and bought \$150.00 worth of fabric between them.
- "This was the fabric that I had when I had my first house at 22 - I'm now 45".

- "My mother put this fabric in my bedroom as a child. I can remember having to live with this".
- "This is like opening up old memories".
- "I have the children's curtains in this fabric – should I buy this for the doona".
- On the first day a group of women, who belonged to a knitting group, were having afternoon tea at Kaos Café. One member of the group went to the toilet, which is near the entrance to the gallery, and noted the sale - then brought her friends in to the exhibition, buying fabrics and taking the catalogue.
- One customer, an artist, bought three rolls of green bamboo fabric which will be used in an installation in Queensland.
- After the opening the Decorama staff were amused when, while having dinner at the adjoining café, they noted that other patrons in the eatery who had bought fabrics at the opening, then lined them up against the walls of the cafe. When they left they could see the customers/audience walking back to their cars late in the evening with bolts of fabric.
- On the first day of the sale, a curator and his partner came to visit Inflight. Unaware of the type of exhibition he was taken aback when confronted with the staff from Decorama. It was obvious that he and his partner were not ready for this experience and had difficulty engaging in conversation about the work. After making several remarks about the appalling fabric designs that reigned during the '80s, they politely declined the offer of a free catalogue and left. It seemed that they had been caught out unaware and it caused a negative response.
- "This fabric is my grandmother and I will make something that reminds me of her".
- During the exhibition *Uncovering Florence* was showing at the State Cinema. It was a movie about the controversial wallpaper designer Florence Broadhurst. A woman came in to the exhibition who had been a Win Television reporter working with the original owners of Decorama, doing their humorous television advertisements in the '70s. She thought this exhibition was part of the promotion for the movie.
- An arts administrator bought a seaside fabric to make a fish tank cover.
- "It really is just like walking into all my friends' homes in the seventies".
- "It really is a generous— the way the exhibition makes these fabrics accessible to artists and others".
- "It would be nice to make something that reminds me of mother".
- One woman, who was a pole dancer, didn't want to take her fabric home, instead insisted that she come back the next day dressed up as a man to be photographed. She wanted to make it a performance.
- Most people photographed with their fabrics wanted to send back photographs of their work.
- One older art student walked into the gallery entrance – saw it was not an exhibition, or what he recognised as an exhibition, and left without entering the space.
- Two sisters who can remember Silk and Textiles, another fabric wholesaler in the 'seventies –told how their mother used to buy fabrics like the ones in the exhibition to make their bras and pants. "Just look in that corner," one of them said, "What does it remind you of – mother!"
- There seemed to be three main comments from the audience about the types of fabric on offer– those that were older were bemused at the idea that they were around when these fabrics were 'in'; then

there were the younger generation who said, 'cool - new stuff'; while the majority were consumed by nostalgia.

### Dog Hell

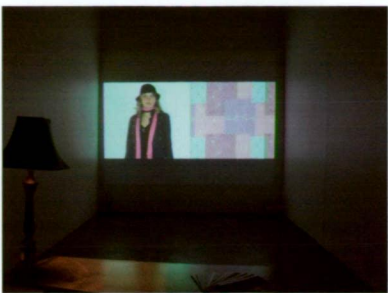
A group of women came to the gallery; one was blind and accompanied by a guide dog. The blind woman proceeded to run her hand along the row of fabrics when, in domino fashion, over 200 bolts of fabric fell over on to the dog. The woman, and her companions, were laughing so much, they were oblivious of the dog's professional handling of the incident and the blind woman lamented that that was the most embarrassing event that had ever happened to her.



Dog Hell  
Image: the author

**Comments and observations from the second and third week of the exhibition where the projections of the bumping in of the exhibition, opening night, sale and portraits of the customers from the previous two weeks were displayed:**

- "Hey it's weird how most of the fabric matches the people – it's a bit like the dog syndrome".
- "They kind of look proud of their choices".
- "It's uncanny how many of the people have clothes that match their fabrics".
- "They look like police mug shots".
- About 10 people returned in the last phase of the exhibition to view themselves in the documentation.
- Many consumers/viewers were disappointed to have missed the sale. The vibrant activity seen in the documentation of the previous two weeks added to the idea of missing a bargain.



Projections - stage two of the project  
Image: the author

**'Burenian' moments**

One of the customers to the exhibition rang me to explain that she had bought a striped fabric, and was quite very enthusiastic about the idea of the sale as an exhibition. She went home and rang her daughter to tell her to come down to Inflight to see the exhibition and buy some fabric. The daughter then said that she had already been and bought some. Later they got together to view their purchase – they both had bought fabrics that were almost identical – a stripe. Amused, they commented that they had bought an awning - and proceeded to hang the fabrics out the window. They then flagged down a passer by and asked them to take a photograph.

The woman then proceeded to take the fabric into the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery where she detained a gallery worker to take her photograph of her fabric with a large black and white painting. Needing two people to hold up the fabric, she co opted the help of another gallery official walking past, who promptly halted the endeavour saying that it was not allowed in the museum.



Image: Eve Beecroft

Undeterred, the woman went home to find the council working on the street outside her house. They were holding up a large sheet of perforated orange plastic and she proceeded to engage them in a photo opportunity where they replaced the orange plastic with her 'Burenian' striped fabric. Finally she took the fabric to the supermarket and installed it into the fruit and vegetable section.





Image: Eve Beecroft

Her email reads:

=====Original message text=====

From: Eve Beecroft <ebeecroft@friends.tas.edu.au>

Date: Wed, 04 Oct 2006 4:28:55 EDT

Subject:

Dear Fiona

After the house visit to Georgie at your exhibition 'Decorama', I rang my daughter, Esther so that she could join in the excitement. She creates many quilts and satchels for gathering fruit and vegetables and I knew she would enjoy seeing the patterns. Only recently have I handed over an old cardboard suitcase full of Gilchrist patterns, swatches of cloth and beloved pieces of fabric too lovely, to full of memories to discard. I knew she would enjoy feeling her way through them and reconstructing clothing. Esther had already been to your exhibition and like me, carried home a bolt of stripy material. Snap! We both took home a cream based stripey fabric.

I just had to take some photographs for you, cloth blowing in the wind. It is not uncommon for us to choose similar things and we both liked each others material this time too. We were alone at the stable, Esther's home, and so we found someone in the street to take the photograph. It reminded us of being in Italy and seeing sheets billowing from windows. Beach house awnings open on hot days. Lovely smell of fresh washing dried in the sun.

I do not know if you want to make stills, a loop or a slide show. Feel free to crop and edit. etc.

The supermarket images had to happen because the fabric reminded me of market places, awnings and fairs. You may not know that country shows and CWA creativity is a part of my art theme.

Council path builders have been outside my place for a few weeks now playing with their colourful big toys, wearing their fluorescent shirts. Orange safety mess has made a barrier for redirecting the many people who walk their dogs and push prams along the water's edge. Asking the burly men to hold a bit of domestic fabric in the place where more orange plastic was about to go was a bit of fun.

They thought I was setting them up and one man smartly moved away but after I had reassured them this was in the name of art and they were not going to appear on some strange television orradio show, they were perfect artist's models.

I did try to take a photograph in the TMAG in front of a huge patterned work of art by Robert MacPherson...one design to another..but the attendants would not allow it. I had it set up but the wrong person walked in.

Best wishes for sharing art making  
Eve Beecroft.

**Works from other audience members:**



Images: Grace Garton



Image Justy Phillips

**APPENDIX III**

**List of Images**

**Fig.1**

Freedom sales catalogue, Winter 2005 pp. 2-3

**Fig. 2a**

**Le Corbusier**

Unité d'Habitation, Marseilles 1947-53

Image: Curtis p. 438

**Fig. 2b**

**Minoru Yamasaki**

Pruitt Igoe, Low cost housing, St Louis

Missouri 1950. Demolished 1972

Image: Curtis p. 448

**Fig. 3**

*Fantastic Furniture Catalogue* 2005

**Fig. 4**

**Monika Nador**

*Maclovio Rojas, Tijuana – InSite 2000* 2000

Acrylic paint on wall, dimensions variable.

Image Courtesy of the artist, and *On Reason and Emotion Catalogue*  
p. 152

**Fig. 5**

'Tone on tone' fabric showing figure ground similarities

Image: the artist

**Fig. 6**

**Andy Warhol**

*Marilyn Monroe* 1962.

Image: Gombrich p. 152

**Fig. 7**

**Fiona Lee**

*Poured*, 2003

Concrete. Dimensions variable.

Image: the artist

**Fig. 8**

**Felix Gonzalez-Torres**

*Untitled (Placebo – Landscape – for Roni)* 1993

Image: Bishop p. 114

**Fig. 9**

**Yayoi Kasama**

*Aggregation: One Thousand Boat Show* (detail) 1963

Sewn stuffed fabric, wooden row boat, 999 silkscreen images on paper,

Image Yayoi Kasama p. 57

**Fig. 10**  
**Andy Warhol**  
*Cow Wallpaper* 1966  
 Serigraph printed on wallpaper  
 Dia Art Foundation, Dia: Beacon, Beacon, NY.  
 Image: [http://www.artincontext.org/the\\_library](http://www.artincontext.org/the_library)

**Fig. 11**  
**Daniel Buren**  
*Le Pavillon Coupé, Découpé, Taillé, Gravé. (The Pavillion Cut, Cut up, Carved, Engraved)* 1986.  
 Engraved walls.  
 Image: Lelong p. 124.

**Fig. 12**  
**Daniel Buren**  
*Les Deux Plateaux (Two Plateaus)* 1985-86  
 Sculpture in situ, Palais-Royal, Paris.  
 Image Lelong. p. 101.

**Fig. 13**  
**Michael Lin**  
*ICA Taipei 5.27-8.26.2001*  
 Image: Asia Pacific Triennial catalogue 2002 p. 73

**Fig. 14**  
**Michael Lin**  
*House*, 1998  
 Emulsion Wall painting  
 Bamboo Curtain Studio Taipei, Taiwan  
 Image. [www. Galerie-Meile-ch/MichaelLin](http://www.Galerie-Meile-ch/MichaelLin)

**Fig. 15**  
**Michael Lin**  
*Cigarette Break* 1999.  
 Upholstered Chairs,  
 Pentalite print on wood.  
 Collection; The artist  
 Image: Australia Pacific Triennial catalogue 2002

**Fig. 16**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*It's the Vibe* 2005  
 Digital print on Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery bench  
 Collection: Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery  
 Image: Simon Cuthbert

**Fig. 17**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*Iron*, 2002  
 Etching  
 Image; Jan Dallas

**Fig. 18**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*Safe as Houses* 2003  
 Pink batts  
 Image: the artist



**Fig. 19**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*Pattern Repeat* 2003  
 Lino print, digital image, ink and organza  
 Image: Jan Dallas

**Fig. 20**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*Untitled* 2003  
 Engraved pink plasterboard, enamel paint, plastic, Porters Interno Limewash.  
 Image: Lucia Usmiani

**Fig. 21**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*The White Couch* 2005  
 Computer screen grab.  
 Image: the artist

**Fig. 22**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*The White Couch* 2005  
 Projected pattern fabrics, white couch.  
 Image: the artist

**Fig. 23**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*Where have all the cabbages gone?* 2006 (detail)  
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**Fig. 24**  
 Gerry Harvey Image taken from a sales catalogue and trial layout for the wallpaper  
 Image: the author

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 Image: the author

**Fig. 26**  
**Robert Venturi**  
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 Image: <http://www.raumausstattung.de/7999/7079.html>

**Fig. 27**  
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 Image: the author

**Fig. 28**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*Toneontone* 2006 (detail)  
 Pink batts.  
 Image: the author

**Fig. 29**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*Toneontone* 2006  
 Pink batts.  
 Image: the author

**Fig. 30**  
**Fiona Lee** *Toneontone* 2006  
Pink batts size.  
Image: the author

**Fig. 31**  
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Image: the author

**Fig. 32.**  
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Image: the author

**Fig . 33**  
Decorama 'sale' signage and intervention into the neighbouring café.  
Image: the author

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**Fiona Lee**  
*Decorama at Inflight* 2006  
Opening night  
Image: the author

**Fig. 35**  
**Fiona Lee**  
*Decorama at Inflight* 2006  
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Image: the author

**Fig. 36**  
A 'Burenian' moment 2006  
Image: Eve Beecroft

**Fig. 37**  
Fiona Lee  
*Me* 2006  
Digital projection (detail)  
Image: the author

**Fig. 38**  
Submission installation image  
Image: Jan Dallas

## APPENDIX IV

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Current Biographical Details

2003 – Current Touring Officer, Contemporary Art Services Tasmania (CAST)  
 2004 – Co-ordinator Art Forum Program, School of Art University of Tasmania  
 2003 – 2004 Co-ordinator Fine Arts Gallery, School of Art, University of Tasmania  
 2003 – Paper conservator, Archives Office of Tasmania  
 2002 – 2003 - Assistant Registrar, University of Tasmania Fine Art Collection  
 1998 – 2001 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours)  
 2000 – 2001 Production & Research, *Electric Island: Art Deco in Tasmania* Exhibition Carnegie Gallery, as part of Ten days on the Island  
 2001 – Assisted with production, *Between Phenomena: The Panorama and Tasmania*. Plimsoll Gallery University of Tasmania, as part of Ten Days on the Island  
 1998 – 2001 Bachelor Fine Arts University of Tasmania Majoring in Art Theory & Printmaking  
 1997 – 1998 Architectural History & Theory, University of Tasmania  
 1994 – 1997 Design consultant  
 1990 – 1993 Diploma Interior Design, Rhodex Institute Brighton, England  
 1984 – Studies Interior Design, Melbourne College of Decoration

### Membership Details

2001 – Current – Plimsoll Gallery Committee, University of Tasmania  
 National Association of the Visual Arts (NAVA)  
 Member Salamanca Arts Centre

### Exhibition Details

2006 – *Decorama at Inflight*, Solo exhibition in conjunction with the Decorama store. Inflight Art, Hobart.  
 2006 – *Transport*, curated by Douglas McManus Salamanca Arts Centre,  
 2006 – *Deluxe: Decorous crossovers between art and design*, curated by Milan Milojevic, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2006 – *Come with me*, curated by James Newitt, Group exhibition Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens,  
 2005 – *The White Couch*, Solo exhibition and residency, Decorama, Moonah  
 2005 – *Acidophilus: Live Culture at the Museum*, curated by John Vella, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery and CAST  
 2004 – *Made Useless*, exhibition with Tracey Cockburn, curated by Leonie Oakes, Entrepot Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2004 – *IXL ART* Group exhibition curated by Noel Frankham, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2003 – *Here and There* Print exchange between University of Miami and University of Tasmania, curated by Leonie Oakes Exhibition, Entrepot Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2003 – *Where the Heart is*, New works with Jonathan Daniels and Lucia Usmiani, curated by Jonathan Hodgkin, Entrepot Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2003 – *Book*, Honours and Postgraduate book exhibition, Fine Arts Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2002 – *Hard Copies*, Solo exhibition Foyer Gallery, Salamanca Place.  
 2002 – *Sexland*, Printmaking Group Postgraduate and Honours Exhibition, Fine Arts Gallery, University of Tasmania.  
 2002 – *Tangent*, Honours Graduate Exhibition, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania

2002 – *URBANRURAL*, Print exhibition with Christine Scott, Entrepot Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2002 – Fringe Festival, Hobart Art In Windows Exhibition  
 2002 – *Material Girl*, Women Tasmania International Women's Day Art Competition & Exhibition, Moonah Arts Centre  
 2002 – *Material Girl*, Women Tasmania' International Women's Day Art Exhibition Regional Tour of Tasmania  
 2001 – *Raw Group* Print, Paint & Photo Exhibition, Long Gallery, Salamanca Place  
 2001 – Art Natural Environment & Wilderness Student Exhibition, Entrepot Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2001 – *Hasta la Vista (baby)*, Third Year Printmaking Exhibition, Fine Arts Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 2000 – *Airing*, Student Printmakers Exhibition, Entrepot Gallery, University of Tasmania  
 1999 – Student Sculpture Exhibition, Long Gallery, Salamanca Place  
 1996 – *Not Yet Famous*, Exhibition, Battery Point Community Centre

### Collections

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery  
 Jacob Allom & Wade, Architects (JAWS 2 Collection)  
 Numerous private collections  
 Commissions  
 2006 – Port Arthur Project. Commission for 10 Days on the Island Festival in 2007  
 2005 – Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery & CAST. *Acidophilus* Exhibition  
 2003 – 04 -IXL Art an exhibition involving the Hunter St redevelopment  
 2002 – Jacob Allom & Wade, JAWS 2 project in the Albura St School redevelopment.

### Reviews and Articles

*The Saturday Mercury*, March 2, 2002  
*Imprint*, Vol 37. Autumn, 2002 No. 1, p. 18  
*The Saturday Mercury*, November 23, 2002  
 'Hard Copies' *Artlink*, Vol 23 No. 1, 2003, p.92, by Sean Kelly  
 'Comfy Way to Inhabit Art' *The Mercury*, April 6, 2005, p 15 by John Briggs  
 'Bench Worth a Look', *Sunday Tasmanian*, April 10, p. 6, by Jane Rankin-Reid  
*Eyeline*, Number 57: Winter 2005. P. 52 by Briony Downes  
 Edge Radio Arts Program, Interview 3 September, 2006  
 Edge Radio Arts Program, Review 24 September, 2006

### Publications

Lee, Fiona. 'Delirium and Deprivation: Realigning a Gendered Domestic Aesthetic' in *Imaging Research Alchemies: Community exchanges*. Ed. Glenn Pass and Denise Woods. Perth: Black Swan Press, 2004. pp 151–174  
 Lee, Fiona. 'VACS: A Tasmanian Perspective' *NAVA Quarterly* June 2006

### Prizes and Awards

2006 – Marie Edwards Travelling Scholarship, Cite International de Arts, Paris  
 2006 – National Association for the Visual Arts, Visual and Craft Artists' Grant  
 2005 – University of Tasmania Graduate Research Scholarship  
 2002 – University of Tasmania representative at the 5th Student International Art Biennial in Skopje (Republic of Macedonia) - second prize.